

# Causes of Election violence in Africa

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## Abstract

The return to multiparty politics and elections in Sub-Saharan African (SSA) in the early 1990s was viewed as a positive step towards democratisation on the continent after 03 decades of autocratic rule. Elections have however seldom led to peaceful political transitions. Demands for and results of elections continue to plunge many countries into violence. The purpose of this study was to examine the sources of electoral violence in Africa. The study was reliant on electoral violence theory by Høglund (2009). The evidence showed that patrimonialism as the style of politics, the types of elections, the type of electoral system and election administration are the main causes of election violence in Africa. It was recommended that election management bodies should be given more autonomy in the management of elections.

**Keywords:** Sources, Election, violence, Africa.

## **I. Introduction**

Competitive elections were first introduced in Africa during the colonial era. Lindberg (2008:n.a) has noted that these elections were introduced as “a form of ‘tutelary’ democracy that Africans were expected to learn from as a precondition for independence.” Some pioneer leaders in Africa acceded to power through these peaceful and competitive pre-independence elections. Ironically, these same leaders then claimed that stability and unity were necessary for national development and national integration. They pushed for the One-Party State as the best form of government to achieve these objectives. As a result, more than 40 One-Party States were established in Africa by 1975. The majority of these regimes were [...]patrimonial in character (Takeuchi, 2007).

The most surprising thing about these One-Party States was that they continued to use elections of some sort. Only Uganda suspended elections completely (Lindberg, 2004). The elections conducted under One-Party systems were not only uncompetitive, and therefore undemocratic, but could not lead to peaceful political transition. As a result, violent conflict and coups became the dominant means of unseating leaders during the Cold War period. 63 military coups were successfully carried out in 33 African States between 1952 and 1986 (Souaré, 2014). Johnson, Slater & McGowan (1984:622) asserted in this regard that “...the African military coup d’état has accomplished the transfer of power and influence...more frequently than have elections and other forms of constitutionally sanctioned regime change.”

At the end of the Cold War, there were popular demands in Africa for a return to multi-party politics and democracy. Many autocratic regimes eventually bowed down to the pressure especially as Western powers no longer saw any reasons to tolerate autocracy on the continent (Kpundeh, 1992). The return of multi-party politics provided both politicians and scholars the opportunity to test, empirically, the expectation that multi-party elections would end the internal struggles for power that had characterized the One-Party system and function as the mechanism for selecting legitimate, accountable and result oriented leadership.

However, the return to multi-party politics as from 1990 soon proved to be no more than a disguised continuation of the practices that were attributed to One-Party States. Despite “the

frequency of elections and the advancements in the quality of democracy across the continent [since 1990, a situation] that has generated a sense of demo-optimism” (Adolfo, Kovacs, Nyström & Uta, 2012:1) “the holding of elections has been closely accompanied by another, much more worrying trend of election-related violence...” (Motsamai, 2010:5).

According to Adolfo et al. (2012:1), “election violence is regarded as a sub-category of political violence that is primarily distinguished by its timing and motive”. Reif (2014) has defined electoral violence as:

“any spontaneous or organized act by candidates, party supporters, election authorities, voters, or any other actor that occurs during an electoral process, [starting from the pre-electoral period or context through] [...] voter registration to the date of inauguration of a new government, that uses physical harm, intimidation, blackmail, verbal abuse, violent demonstrations, psychological manipulation, or other coercive tactics aimed at exploiting, disrupting, determining, hastening, delaying, reversing, or otherwise influencing an electoral process and its outcome.”

Electoral violence has been a major problem on the continent since 1990 and has had devastating human, financial and material consequences. In Angola, the 1992 elections led to a ten (10) year civil war. The May 2005 election in Ethiopia hailed to be the first truly competitive multi-party election in that country instead turned out to be marred by post-election violence that led to no less than 200 deaths and tens of thousands of arrests. In Kenya, the 2007/2008 elections left 1500 dead and 660000 displaced (Owens et al. 2013:3) and in the Ivory Coast “the 2010 presidential election led to a contested outcome. The standoff that followed between the opposition leader, Ouattara and incumbent Gbagbo caused more than 3000 deaths” (*Ibid*).

The above-mentioned cases are a few examples of a more widespread phenomenon in Africa. According to Buchard (2015:3), “while there has been a substantial year-to-year variation in the frequency of election-related violence since 2008, the trend line seems to be decreasing but still remains close to 50%”. Between January 2011 and August 2017, over 100 elections were held in 44 African countries. No less than five referenda, 21 general elections, 35 elections to the

legislature, 26 presidential elections, 14 gubernatorial and five local/municipal elections took place. Almost all these elections had cases of electoral violence at one stage of the poll. The rather widespread and recurrent nature of this phenomenon on the African continent makes scholarly investigation of the sources of election violence continuously necessary. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to examine the factors which explain election violence in Africa. Data is sourced from a systematic review of several cases of electoral violence and analysed against a theoretical framework. The study uses data from more than 50 elections from 2011 to 2017.

The foregoing is the introduction, which is Part I. Part II situates the study within the literature. Part III examines selected cases of electoral violence in Africa. The last part is a conclusion.

## **II. Literature review**

Some scholars such as Nkwachukwu (2013) have looked at electoral violence as a by-product of new democracies. Others Such as Leonard (2011) and Høglund (2009) have treated election-related violence as a characteristic of conflict-ridden societies. These studies examine the manifestations and consequences of electoral violence for society and for the future of democracy. Writing on *Vote buying and violence and Nigerian election campaigns*, Bratton, (2008) addresses the Nigerian case study in this vein. However, studies that focus on the sources of electoral violence tend to identify causal mechanisms across two or more broad categories with various appellations vis cultural and structural, pent-up and proximate causes.

In the article *Election-related violence in Africa*, Atoubi (2012:1) contends that the “[the cultural perspective presupposes the existence of] a political culture of thuggery that generally predisposes actors to engage in violence and intimidation during political contests, [while the structural explanation suggests that] society and politics are organized in a manner that generates conflict.” As for pent-up and proximate causal factors, Ngwane (2015) in his article *Election-related conflicts in Africa*, has stated that the former concerns such issues as societal inequalities, frustration among the youths as a result of employment and the hijacking of all opportunities by ruling cabal, while the latter deals with such issues as flawed electoral systems.

Notwithstanding the relevance of these views in understanding the problem under study, there is little consensus on the causes of electoral violence in Africa. The multiple causes usually advanced make it difficult to tackle the problem. It is, however, unrealistic to attribute the problem to a single cause. This study examines evidence across several elections from 2011 to 2017 against electoral violence theory by Hugulund (2009), identifying three main causes of election violence in Africa. To contribute to the literature, this study was able to use the evidence to expand the scope of the causes found across the three main areas identified as Hoglund (2009) as the main sources of election-related violence.

### **III. Causes of electoral violence**

#### **Nature of politics**

Höglund (2009:423) argues that “patrimonialism, conflict cleavages, violence as a legitimate political tool, [cultures of] impunity [and] access to arms are enabling conditions of electoral violence in conflict-ridden societies.” For these conditions to effectively lead to violence, Höglund (2009:423) contends that they must be exploited by triggering factors such as violent actors and a biased security force. In Africa, these conditions are not proper to conflict-ridden societies but are visible in most, if not all States in transition.

Bratton & van de Walle (1994:458) have stated that “[under patrimonialism, both the power] and the right to rule is ascribed to a person rather than to an office.” The ruler acts as if the State were his property and sovereignty is considered as belonging to him and not to the people. According to Huertas (2014) patrimonial regimes that emerged at independence in Africa replicated colonial institutions which benefitted a few who justified their actions by arguing that their privatisation of State power was necessary for unity and development.

Democratic transition and post-conflict construction from the 1990s gave rise to neo-patrimonialism. The difference between patrimonialism and neo-patrimonialism is that while individuals and State institutions are confounded in the former, “there is a distinction between the institutions and individuals [in the latter] but this is difficult to observe because the system is pervaded by relationships of loyalty and dependence” (Seifu, 2012:46). Such systems are at the

centre of politics in most African countries. The relationships of loyalty and dependence are also termed 'patron-client relationships'. In such relationships, the "[patron] provides protection, services or rewards to the clients (usually individuals of lower status) who become the patron's political followers" (Hoglund, 2009:421). The main characteristics of neo-patrimonialism are exclusionary politics, the reward of loyalty over efficiency and preference for corruption over the rule of law, as seen in the police becoming the personal force of the patron (Hoglund, 2009:420). A State that exhibits any of these characteristics can experience electoral violence.

The parliamentary elections of 31 August 2012 in Angola, for example, were marred by post-election violence (PEV) due to the perceived cheating by the incumbent. The management of the election by the Dos Santos regime was typical of a neo-patrimonial State. There were irregularities and contradicting procedures linked especially to the management of contracts connected to the process. This imbroglia involved Government and security officials. There were equally: unaudited voter registration rolls because of multiple Elections Management Bodies (EMBs) despite a law that hands elections management to the National Electoral Commission (CNE); parallel organs and fraud; false accreditation and ghost polling stations; voter profiling and forced abstention (Roque, 2013:2). Despite complaints filed by the opposition, there was no government inquiry. This is logical as the irregularities were orchestrated by the same government under the tight grip of President José Eduardo Dos Santos. Electoral violence was flared-up by the unrestrained use of force by the police.

Some other countries that organised elections between 2011 and 2017 are Burundi, Republic of Congo (Brazzaville), Ethiopia, Guinea Bissau, Guinea Conakry, Kenya, Liberia, Senegal, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe and especially the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Since these countries are characterised by neo-patrimonialism it is more than likely that the electoral violence that affected the elections they organised during the period 2011-2017 was partly due to the way they conduct politics. All these countries have been described as neo-patrimonial regimes and nature of politics has been blamed for leading to electoral violence in these countries. For example, Triche (2013) and Seifu (2012) had found this to be the case in past

elections in Kenya's 2007/2008 and in Ethiopia in 2005 respectively. Neo-patrimonialism is significant because it affects almost all African States to differing degrees (Hueratas, 2014).

Systems of patrimonialism and neo-patrimonialism in Africa are also characterised by power for the sake of enjoyment, showmanship and personality cult to be kept by all means. Enjoyment of power at the summit of State has led to a situation where the economic fall-outs and privileges of being in power have been overblown by the ruling class. Resource disputes therefore ensue and as a result, political races can cause electoral violence (Okpotor, 2015). At another level, this has led to over-ambition, over politicisation and polarisation. While the populace has become over politicised due to manipulation from the political elite, it has hardly enjoyed the economic benefits due to the citizenry. Years of deliberate bad governance have led to mismanagement of State resources and the result is general confusion; lack of accountability; impunity; poverty and youth unemployment. These same poor and unemployed youths are easily manipulated by political entrepreneurs who exploit their vulnerability, transforming them into electoral thugs.

The drive to hold power using all means necessary in Africa is clearly seen in the upsurge of 'third termism'. The shift from autocracy to democracy in the 1990s has not changed much in the relationship between enjoyment and power. Neo-patrimonial networks are at work to enforce one-man-rule and one-party dominance. What has happened is that most regimes in place during the 1990s, and even other regimes that replaced incumbents after the 1990s, accepted the condition of a maximum of two Presidential mandates resulting from the democratisation process to maintain power. During the early transition period, most of these regimes then transformed the patrimonial autocratic rule that prevailed during One-Party system into neo-patrimonial authoritarian and semi-authoritarian electoral democracies. The consolidation of this neo-patrimonial State and one-party dominance has now led to two subversive manoeuvres to stay in power: incumbents seek third terms or unlimited mandates either through referenda or constitutional amendments in parliaments under their control, or they fine-tune or interpret the Constitution in a manner as to ensure their longevity in power.

In Congo Brazzaville in 2015 and Niger 2009-2010, there were referenda that were meant to eliminate the limitation of presidential terms. In both cases there was PEV and while President

Sassou Nguesso of Congo Brazzaville succeeded to remain in power, President Mamadou Tandja was ousted in a military coup. In Burkina Faso in 2014, President Blaise Compaore's attempt to revise the Constitution to remove term limits was met by stiff resistance from the population. He eventually stepped down and fled the country.

In countries like Senegal in 2012, Rwanda in 2013, Zimbabwe in 2013 and Burundi from 2011 to 2015, incumbents attempted to fine-tune or interpret the Constitution in their favour in a bid to stay in power. In most of these cases, there has been electoral violence where especially referenda are used or where protests arise in the run-up to or in a pre-electoral context as a result of such manoeuvres. President Paul Kagame of Rwanda maintained power following a constitutional referendum engineered for the purpose. In Senegal, strong resistance from the population led to the incumbent, Abdoulaye Wade being voted out; in Zimbabwe Mugabe imposed himself in the 16 March 2013 Constitutional referendum but not without electoral violence; in Burundi, incumbent Pierre Nkurunziza and his partisans interpreted the Arusha Accords of 2005 as they saw suitable for them, stating that the limitation of mandates to two terms as stipulated by the said Accords did not include the first mandate, since Parliament, not the population, voted Nkurunziza to power. Nkurunziza then went on to request the confirmation of his eligibility for the July 2015 Presidential election from the Constitutional Court. His actions led to a severe electoral crisis, probably the worst, during the period from 2011 to 2015, with a huge death toll and refugee crisis.

Neo-patrimonial States are over-politicized and polarised in part because of the actions of over-ambitious politicians who wish to achieve power. Some cases of electoral violence arise where over-aspiring opposition candidates seek to become President of the Republic or attain some high elective position even through the use of electoral violence. Even those who are not vying for electoral positions but are benefitting from the patron-client relationships are involved in instigating electoral violence. Bamgbose (2012) has argued that this is one of the causes of the electoral violence in Nigeria especially in 2011. Bamgbose (2012:216) further states that:

“the demand to participate in politics keeps on increasing in geometrical progression while the absorbing capacity of these participants increases in arithmetic progression; this



leads to a very high competition among the participants who are prone to take the most extreme measure in order to win and maintain political power.”

The monetisation of politics in neo-patrimonial States in Africa is also a major instigator of electoral violence. Alongside the degree of power wielded in high elective office, the huge benefits that accrue to holding public office means elections have high stakes and the rhetoric is that “it is our time to chop”. Bamgbose (2012:217) found this to be the case in the election violence that marred the Nigerian 2011 elections.

The enjoyment of privileges and power has led to two types of violent actors in neo-patrimonial Africa. First, there are those in power who wield the privileges of the State monopoly of power and have the proclivity of using it for their own protection. Second, we have opponents who, especially in conflict-ridden societies, do have some firepower. This culture of thuggery is deeply entrenched in neo-patrimonial politics in Africa.

Unlike political entrepreneurs who at some stage of their careers will enjoy the ‘national cake’, the masses are generally poor, unemployed or face severe hardship due to unemployment and very low wages that do not match the cost of living. State resources are highly concentrated in the hands of a few who control the neo-patrimonial system. Those who benefit from these resources are those from segments of society that are favourable to the existing patronage.

Impoverished youths then often provide a source of electoral thugs for political entrepreneurs depending on the nature of mobilisation during elections. These youths are often mobilised along ethnic lines and while those in power promise to improve their lot as they are ‘better placed’ to know what they need and how to go about giving it to them, opposition rhetoric usually focuses on the reasons why the ruling party is the principal foe of the youth, the poor and the unemployed (even though mostly true) and should be removed by all means necessary. Such rhetoric has been found to prepare or condition youths to be organised along ethnic and/or partisan lines to eventually become triggers of electoral violence.

The Kenyan experience is very illustrative of the negative mobilisation of young people. Compared to the 2007 elections in Kenya that were marred by bloodshed, in which

politically-connected youth gangs were implicated, less violence was observed in the March 2013 elections. This was largely because in the latter elections politicians were found to be little involved in the use of hate speech and the sponsoring of ethnic-related violence, two behaviours that were common in the 2007 election.

Ethnic politics and (violent) youth mobilisation has also characterised other neo-patrimonial African States. It was partly responsible for electoral violence in Cote d'Ivoire in 2010-2011 and contributed considerably to the severe electoral crises in countries like Guinea-Conakry (2013) and the DRC in 2011.

Looking at the DRC general elections of 28 November 2011, Hogg's (2011) ideas of conflict cleavages, violence as a legitimate political tool and impunity as causes of electoral violence find all their meaning. The Supreme Court announced results for the Presidential elections that showed that incumbent Joseph Kabila won the race with 48.95% of votes as against 32.33% for the now late Etienne Tshisekedi. Tshisekedi denied defeat and declared himself President. "[He also gave Kabila's government]...an ultimatum to release his imprisoned supporters or have them forcibly released by their fellow [supporters]" (Hogg, 2011).

After the declaration of the results, protests that had already begun even before the elections intensified because of suspected cheating from the regime. These protests were met by extreme repression from the regime's security forces leading to several deaths and injuries (Human Rights Watch, HRW, 2011). Trigger-happy security forces, including soldiers of the President's Republican Guard, reportedly committed atrocious killings and detentions in all impunity (HRW, 2013). "The Presidential Guard is tasked solely with the protection of the President and is forbidden by Congolese law to arrest civilians" (Carter Center, 2011:47). Neither the brutality of the DRC President's guard nor that of security forces comes as surprise as inside the DRC army the culture of violence and impunity remains largely unchallenged. This is the case in several African States and it is what makes the armed and security forces triggers of electoral violence.

Based on the examples described above, it appears that factors related to the nature of politics in Africa such as (neo)patrimonialism, conflict cleavages, violence as a legitimate political tool,

cultures of impunity and access to arms as identified by Hoglund (2009) are largely responsible for electoral violence in Africa. The combination of these factors with triggering factors such as biased security forces, side-lined, and underprivileged youths make electoral violence likely.

### **Type and nature of elections**

Hoglund (2009:422) has stated that the “nature of electoral competition [and] the propensity of actors to use violence [are influenced by the] type of election...[whether it is] a referendum,...a local election...a presidential election, or a [parliamentary] election.”

For Hoglund (2009:421) the level of competitiveness and the way political mobilization occurs during the election are key explanatory factors. Highly competitive races may lead to electoral violence. In other words, electoral contests with close margins of victory create higher levels of uncertainty about the outcome and eventually may lead to the outbreak of violence (Seifu, 2012:29). This was seen in the case of Gabon in 2016. The results of the presidential elections showed that incumbent Ali Bongo had won the Presidency with 49.85% of the votes while Ping had 48.23%. Like in 2009, the announcement of the results was immediately followed by violent clashes on the streets of Libreville between the Police and opposition supporters who cried foul. Deaths and material damage were recorded (Nghah, 2016).

In some cases what motivates using violent mobilization and resulting to violence in close races is that a party in power that fears the looming economic and political uncertainties of losing an election will use force to stay in power. As such, elections involve elements of high stakes. Such pent-up factors as related to the fear of losing access to State resources or that of being prosecuted for economic and political crimes makes the use of [electoral] violence particularly attractive for incumbents and their cohorts. The cases of Burkina Faso and Niger are good examples. With respect to the crisis in Burkina Faso from 2014 to 2015, this type of attitude motivated the coup d'état of the Regiment of Presidential Security (*Régiment de la Sécurité Présidentielle*, RSP) led by General Diendéré. The purpose of this coup was to pre-empt an electoral process that had a high probability of leading to an ouster from power of those who could see to the protection of former regime cronies of Compaore. Bertrand (2015) has noted that:

“Each attempt at undermining the interim government [was] stirred by fear over personal interest and desire for self-preservation...The [National Council for Democracy, *Conseil National pour la Démocratie*,] CND justified the coup by claiming the transitional government was unable to lead the country to democracy, citing the barring of political figures close to Compaoré from running in the upcoming elections, as agreed in the Electoral Code adopted in April 2015. This argument strangely echoes Compaoré’s own justifications in 1987 after he led the assassination of Thomas Sankara and took power for himself in order to “rectify” the mistakes of the Sankarist revolution...Individuals within the RSP, including General Diendéré, also [feared] being dragged into judicial cases related to the Compaoré era, such as the re-opened case of the assassination of former President Sankara.”

The desire to access and hold onto State resources using violence is not proper to incumbents and their cohorts. Marginalized politicians and sections of the society may wish to use violent mobilization and reasons (the close margins) to access power and eventually the enjoyment of State resources. From observation of elections in Africa from 2011 to 2017, electoral violence mostly affected Presidential elections. Executive power is very central in neo-patrimonial Africa and becoming Head of the Executive means controlling the entire system.

While the cases of Nigeria (religious, ethnic, regional and other factors) and Guinea (ethnic politics, ambition, cultures of violence and impunity) are examples of violent mobilization, the electoral violence in Ghana in 2012 provides a good example of electoral violence resulting from indecent language and close races; meanwhile, the attacks on politicians in both the Ghana 2012 and especially the Liberia 2011 elections depict the dangers faced by politicians in such environments. Høglund (2009:421) has noted that this is one of the risks of violent mobilization and the flaring of thuggery during elections.

In Ghana, “President John Dramani Mahama's National Democratic Congress (NDC) won the...[7th December 2012 parliamentary elections with 148 seats and the] New Patriotic Party (NPP) [of] Mr. Nana Akufo-Addo took 123 seats” (Inter-Parliamentary Union, IPU, 2013).

Mahama<sup>1</sup> won the presidential elections with 50.7% while Akufo-Addo<sup>2</sup> scored 47.8%. Akufo-Addo later filed a petition at the Supreme Court to challenge the results claiming there were irregularities, which allegations were denied by the Electoral Commission that subsequently filed its own petition at the Supreme Court to request for the details of the irregularities. Beyond this perceived mismanagement by the electoral commission, reportedly in complicity with the incumbent and some other government officials, Corey-Boulet (2012) has stated that tensions also escalated into electoral violence due to the possible threat emanating from the presence of Ivorian ex-combatants in the country.

Abdallah (2013) has noted that Ghana's 2012 elections were marred by widespread violence and attacks on political figures. This author notes that the impunity with which the perpetrators operated led to further fears and doubts about the successful conduct of the elections. He also states that violent mobilisation was because of the use of indecent language in both the political discourse and the media

In effect, situations where emphasis during the campaign is placed on differences rather than those things which bring people together often lead to the "danger that social conflicts and cleavages are intensified" Hoglund (2009). The type of language used during the elections can also lead to inflammatory behaviour in the support base composed of over-politicised unemployed youths organised along ethnic lines. For example, Asamoah et al., (2014) argued that:

"the persistent use of intemperate language affects the quality of policy discourse and also creates tension at every election year. Faced with the use of indecorous language at every election year, a common feature of elections in Ghana is the numerous appeals for peace from all sections of society. The use of indecent words by political actors thus poses a serious threat to Ghana's democratic dispensation as it can escalate into serious conflict with social, political and economic ramifications...There was excessive use of abusive words on airwaves and political campaigns [during the 2012 elections in Ghana]."

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<sup>1</sup> He assumed the presidency for the first time in July 2012 following the death of President John Atta Mills

<sup>2</sup> He later on won Mr. Mahama in the 2016 polls and is now Ghana's incumbent.

In most situations on the continent, both factors are seen to be at play. Divisive language has been a major feature of highly competitive elections in Africa. While the use of divisive language can be considered as a negative practice, the competitive nature of elections mostly poses a problem when the election administration is not trusted as seen in the 2017 elections in Kenya and where many lack trust in the electoral system.

### **The electoral administration and type of electoral system**

Electoral administration can be a source of electoral violence in situations where it is not trusted by all parties in an election. Election violence is often caused by perceived fraud which can be addressed by crafting an electoral administration that is trusted. The type of electoral system can also be a source of violence where it raises the election stakes.

Electoral violence can be caused by the choice of electoral administration since questions “relating to impartiality and independence, efficiency, professionalism, and transparency are particularly...important in the context of suspicion and mistrust that characterize post-conflict [and transition] elections” Hoglund (2009:422). Election management models vary from independent models through government-run models to mixed models.

Most elections in Africa are managed by the government executive, increasingly disguised as an independent election commission. This explains the mistrust for EMBs in countries such as Togo, the DRC, the Central African Republic (CAR), Angola, Chad and others. EMBs in such contexts are mostly viewed as “party branches” of the ruling party despite the existence of electoral laws which stipulate that members of the EMB shall not be members or sympathisers of any party. Being a high-ranking member of an EMB is a privileged position and when the head of a neo-patrimonial regime appoints an individual to be part of that EMB this individual would necessarily be favourable to the aspirations of the said patron. From the moment where a person or party running for elections already has a hand in the administration of an EMB either directly or indirectly, it becomes evident that this can lead to mistrust for the EMB and consequently to electoral violence as the EMB will often than not be seen as working for the regime in place.

In the 2011 Elections in the DRC for example, Mavungu (2014) argues that Pastor Ngoy Mulunda, head of the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI), was presented as a member of civil society, but was widely perceived as a close ally of the incumbent. He was accused of participating in engineering electoral fraud in favour of the ruling party, a situation which gave a reason for electoral violence. Election management has also been partly blamed for the 2007 (M'Inoti, 2011) and 2017 post-election violence in Kenya. Similarly, in the 2012 parliamentary elections in Angola, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) led by President Dos Santos was accused of controlling the National Electoral Commission (CNE) and thereby engineering the elections to create the desired results for their regime. This was one of the causes of PEV in that country during that year.

In situations where election management does not present significant weaknesses, violence can also be the product of the electoral system used. Electoral systems determine how votes cast in an election are converted into seats or positions.

The main types of legislative electoral systems are; the plurality-majority system, the proportional systems, and mixed systems. In presidential elections, there are two common systems, the plurality-majority systems, and distribution systems. Election violence is more likely in systems that may produce winners whose support comes mainly from one geographic or ethnic region. Systems that produce winners without considerable support from different parts of the country can also be a source of such violence. As with election management, the choice of electoral system has been considered as a major factor in preventing election violence in Africa.

The Kenyan election system before 2010 is very illustrative of the important role of the electoral system. The system presented the main problems faced on the continent. It was a plurality system which does not require the winner to have a majority of the votes cast. It was consequently possible for a winner to have support from a single region or ethnic group. To mitigate election violence, Kenya has introduced a distributive system which is also used in Nigeria. To be successful, a candidate in a Kenyan presidential election in line with Article

138(4) of the Constitution of Kenya 2010, must obtain at least 25 percent of the vote in at least each of more than half of the 47 Counties.

As with other sources of election violence above, neither the system of elections nor the election management body can singlehandedly explain election violence. Efforts need to be made to address all problems that may undermine the peaceful conduct of elections. As demonstrated in the Kenyan election of 2007, both factors had some influence, and this has been observed with elections in other countries such as Nigeria, Togo, Congo Brazzaville and the DRC.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

The aim of this paper was to examine the main causes of election violence in Africa. The nature of politics, the types of elections, the type of electoral system and election administration are identified as the primary sources of election violence on the continent. African States are for the most part neo-patrimonial. Presidential elections are usually very popular and the risk of violence in this type of election is high when they are very competitive. Election systems that are crafted without sufficient attention paid to context and the poor management of elections have contributed to election violence in many countries.

In neo-patrimonial States like Angola, Djibouti and Gambia under Yayah Jammeh, the usurpation of the State by the ruling parties and incumbents of these nations has created an environment that is not conducive for free, fair, transparent and violence-free elections. In these States, the incumbent autocrats and their parties have extensive control over all institutions. Due to patron-client networks created in such systems, those in support of the regime in place are often ready to rig elections and/or perpetrate violence to maintain their party in power. The security forces are often mobilized as was the case in the DRC in 2011 where the Republican Guard carried out violence against politicians and civilians who opposed Kabila.

The strong control of the executive and weakness in governance that is characteristic of neo-patrimonial regimes have a connection to the problems with elections observed in these settings. In addition, election violence is increasingly associated with electoral systems that have



little incentive for participation and which produce governments dominated by a single ethnic group.

The recurrence of election violence warrants continued improvement of electoral systems in Africa. While several recommendations can be made, perhaps reforming election management can be helpful. The Electoral Administration is scarcely independent enough in Africa to permit the people to directly sanction elected officials in a free, fair, transparent and transparent manner. EMBs in several African countries plagued with electoral violence are controlled by the Executive. Often than not, the leader of the executive is a candidate for election and the temptation to cheat through excessive control of the Electoral Administration is very high. An independent management model means that none of the traditional arms of Government has a hand in the running of the EMB. This type of model will defuse not only electoral violence but will contribute to undermining conflict for State power. Modalities for the establishment of such independent EMBs can be the object of more (academic) reflections.

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