

# Appreciating National Cohesion in Fostering National Security Kenya

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**Abstract:** One of the major challenges humans continue to face at the end of the twentieth century is the achievement of sustainable peace and security. Africa's emerging security challenges are complex, some are predominantly related to governance and/or intra-state conflicts, while the continent's disputed national borders remain a potential source of instability. In defining national security, there has been a notable departure from the state centric view that focused on sovereignty, territorial integrity, and aggression from external threats. The promulgation of a new constitution in 2010 marked the culmination of changes in Kenya's political scene, transforming the political and administrative structures that shaped the country's national security. The democratisation process also changed the security concept from primarily the traditional state centered to the people centered which identifies the individual as the key referent for security. In East Africa, the persistence of ethnocentric conflicts arising from undemocratic government practices, resource based competition, and terrorism continues to undermine security, national cohesion, and integration. National security and national cohesion take into account a wide range of factors that contribute to stability or stimulate conflict. The national security policy is framed based on the national purpose, aim, and defined objectives. Despite the formation of the National Cohesion and Integration Commission and other bodies mandated to enhance national cohesion, this study found that a high number of respondents stated that they have achieved little so far.

**Keywords:** Cohesion, Security, National development, Social capital

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## 1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

One of the major setbacks to economic development in Africa is insecurity. Ozonnia argues that recent security threats are seen to emanate from internally generated factors associated with a multiplicity of conflicts arising from ethnocentric dynamics and governance related issues that undermine national cohesion and render the state vulnerable to threats.<sup>1</sup> The vulnerability of citizens of the same nationality and migrant groups to violence exploitation, terrorism, extremism, cyber-attacks, drugs, banditry, smuggling, and mistreatment in some areas within the country and foreign countries along with the protection of their rights has been threat to national security.<sup>2</sup> However, conflict,

violence and xenophobia need some measures of explicit attention although expressions of sentiments against the practice are clearly on the rise even in countries where they are rampant.

The types of intra-state conflicts witnessed today in the Great Lakes Region for instance, divide the population of a state by undermining interpersonal and social trust, and consequently destroying the social norms, values and social institutions.<sup>3</sup> Until recently, the explanations on the crawling pace of development in sub-Saharan Africa paid insignificant attention to the centrality of security to development.<sup>4</sup> Clearly, a secure environment serves as the foundation for achieving and sustaining any meaningful development.

Conversely, threats to a country's security are now largely internally generated and often borne of lack of social cohesion and economic underdevelopment. This

<sup>1</sup> Ozonnia, Ojielo. A Shared Future: Approaches to National Cohesion and Integration. Amani Papers, UNDP, Kenya. Volume I No 3, (2010), p. 88.

<sup>2</sup> Basrus, Rajesh and Kliem, Frederick. "Covid-19 and International Cooperation: IR Paradigms at odd." Article Number 7, (2021), pp. 3-7.

<sup>3</sup> David Chidester, Phillip Dexter and Wilmot James. What hold us together: social cohesion in South Africa. Compiled by the Social Cohesion and Integration Research Programme of the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC. 2003).

<sup>4</sup> Jo Beall and Sean Fox. Urban Poverty and Development in the 21st Century. Oxfam GB Research Report, (2007).

realization thus emphasizes the need to undertake a recalibration of a state's security in order to reflect current realities, by ensuring that economic security is integrated into the national social security framework of the modern state.

In the African context, national cohesion and integration is both a process and an outcome of instilling and enabling all citizens or persons to have a sense and a feeling that they are members of the same nation engaged in a common enterprise, facing shared challenges and opportunities.<sup>5</sup> Despite its importance for national development, national cohesion and integration remain a persistent challenge and setback for many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), as demonstrated by, among other outcomes, the post-election violence and insecurity in Kenya.<sup>6</sup> According to Machira, weak national cohesion has often been related to slow economic growth and (violent) conflict especially in some sub-Saharan states.<sup>7</sup> Thus national incohesion is a threat to peaceful coexistence that leads to the situation of insecurity dilemma.

A cohesive society is one where people are united with no glaring distinctions in many dimensions of society, trust among neighbours, and the institutions of the state work towards a better future for the citizens.<sup>8</sup> National cohesion is therefore vital for a country that seeks to fast track its development agenda and incorporate a rights-based approach to development.

Ozonnia found that the breakdown of national cohesion and the erosion of social capital can be both causes and consequences of increasing levels of insecurity in a nation.<sup>9</sup> The study notes that the 2007-2008 post-election violence in Kenya caught the country by surprise and heightened awareness of the depth of national in-cohesion in Kenya.<sup>10</sup> In 2012, ethnic clashes escalated in Tana River, an area that had long experienced inter-group peace, leading to widespread population displacement. Equally shocking was an act of

<sup>5</sup> Moser, C. and McIlwaine, C. Latin American Urban Violence as a Development Concern: Towards a Framework for Violence Reduction, World Development, Vol. 34, No.1, (2005), pp. 90-112.

<sup>6</sup> Colletta, Nat and Cullen, Michelle. The Nexus between Violent Conflict, Social Capital and Social Cohesion. World Bank, (2000), p.14.

<sup>7</sup> Machira, Apollos. Armed conflicts and the Law. Nairobi: Aluka Publications, (2009), p.91.

<sup>8</sup> Allen, Greg and Chan, Taniel. "Artificial Intelligence and National Security, Belter Center for Science and International Affairs." (2017), p. 45-51.

<sup>9</sup> Ozonnia, Ojielo. A Shared Future: Approaches to National Cohesion and Integration. Amani Papers, UNDP, Kenya. Volume I No 3, (2010), p. 88.

<sup>10</sup> Basrus, Rajesh and Kliem, Frederick. "Covid-19 and International Cooperation: IR Paradigms at odd." Article Number 7, (2021), pp. 3-7.

terrorism at the Westgate Mall in 2013 that led to nearly 60 civilian casualties. In 2014, government security forces intervened in clashes in Marsabit County in Northern Kenya.<sup>11</sup> These social conflicts initially seem disconnected, yet all are closely linked to cohesion and national security issues in Kenya.

The changes in Kenya's political scene culminated in the promulgation of a new constitution in 2010 which changed the political and administrative structures along which the national security structures had been fashioned. The democratization process also changed the security concept from primarily the traditional state centered to people centered which identifies the individual as the key referent for security. It is based on this background that the study aims to establish national cohesion-national security nexus using the case of Kenya.

Okongo argues that although Kenya has been an island of peace within an unstable region, her national security is increasingly threatened by a myriad of threats inclusive of a persistent state of national in-cohesion that exacerbates ethnic intolerance, tribal skirmishes and other conflicts related to resources competition, flawed elections and a host of historical injustices amongst others.<sup>12</sup> Although each threat impacts on national security, the study will attempt to highlight how in cohesion influences national security with reference to Kenya. This is especially considering that national cohesion was since Kenya gained independence identified as a critical ingredient for national security little literature exists in this area.

## 1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Previous studies have reported that a breakdown of national cohesion and erosion of social capital can be both causes and consequences of increasing levels of insecurity in a nation. Where social capital does exist in fragile countries, it is often of a 'bonding' nature that holds a particular identity group (ethnic population, or political group) within a community together (and can marginalize other groups), rather than 'bridging' social capital that links different groups together.<sup>13</sup>

According to Machira weak national cohesion has often been related to slow economic growth and (violent)

<sup>11</sup> Republic of Kenya/Ministry of Justice, National Cohesion and Constitutional Affairs (2012).

<sup>12</sup> Okongo, Charles. "Evaluating the Challenges and Opportunities of the Use of Military Diplomacy in Intrastate Conflict Management in the Horn of Africa." International Journal of Scientific Research Management, (2021), p. 8.

<sup>13</sup> Ozonnia, Ojielo. A Shared Future: Approaches to National Cohesion and Integration. Amani Papers, UNDP, Kenya. Volume I No 3, (2010), p. 88.

conflict especially in some sub-Saharan states.<sup>14</sup> This means that the attainment of national cohesion is in one of the Kenya Vision 2030 goals under the Political Pillar on the strategy on Security, Peace Building and Conflict Management. However, there have been limited attempts to measure these complex concepts in a systematic manner thus far.

This paper notes that the outbreak of Post-Election Violence in Kenya after the disputed presidential votes tally was a major pointer to the existence of schisms that had been left unaddressed for long. National cohesion underscores need to rebuild relationships. Subtly acknowledged, conflicts erode cohesion and leave indelible memories for the affected. Indeed, there are many individuals sensitizing Kenyans on matters of national cohesion, non-the-less in as much as national cohesive is vital for national security, to date there are still very few planned mechanisms of coordinating them from a national perspective.

### 1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study sought to examine the link between national cohesion and national security in the case of Kenya with specific objectives including:

- i. To assess the status of national cohesion and integration in Africa.
- ii. To what extent does Kenya have national cohesion and national security linkages?
- iii. To establish main actors and strategies for national cohesion and national security in Kenya.

### 1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- i. What is the status of national cohesion and integration in Africa?
- ii. To what extent is there a national cohesion and national security linkage in Kenya?
- iii. Who are the main actors and strategies for national cohesion and national security in Kenya?

### 1.5 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

Instilling and enabling all citizens to feel that they are members of the same community, engaged in a common enterprise, and facing shared challenges and opportunities is the process and outcome of national cohesion and integration.<sup>15</sup> With this in mind, the study

<sup>14</sup> Machira, Apollos. *Armed conflicts and the Law*. Nairobi: Aluka Publications, (2009), p. 91.

<sup>15</sup> Republic of Kenya/Ministry of Justice, National Cohesion and Constitutional Affairs (2012).

intends to help practitioners and policymakers enhance their understanding of national cohesion and national security issues and design appropriate responses to better support communities in their quest for security and cohesion.

Awareness of the status of national cohesion and of the factors that improve or undermine it is important for nation-building. The study therefore aims to contribute to the body of knowledge to determine national cohesion and national security nexus, particularly in Kenya, which will strengthen national development.

There are many actors involved in the country's national cohesion and integration activities. These include the state, non-government organizations, faith-based organizations, media, non-formal sector, communities, community-based groups and individuals. However, their activities are weakly coordinated resulting into duplication of efforts, competition, conflict and inefficient utilization of scarce resources.

The clear identification of responsibilities, mandate and roles of each actor is necessary to enable monitoring by the stakeholders responsible for national cohesion and national reconciliation. Therefore, promoting national cohesion requires the joint involvement and active collaboration of all stakeholders of a society and thus the study intends to act as a point of reference for scholars and academicians interested on the subject matter.

### 1.6 RESEARCH THEORY

Social Capital Theory was employed in this study.. The concept of social capital (though not labeled as such) existed since small communities formed and humans interacted with the expectation of reciprocation and trust; however, the term in its present form and associated meanings was popularized amongst others by Bourdieu (1989).<sup>16</sup> Social capital may be defined as those resources inherent in social relations that facilitate collective action. Social capital resources include trust, norms, and networks of association representing any group which gathers for a common purpose.<sup>17</sup> The growing societal threats could very well undermine national cohesion and lead to much worse.

Social capital is seen for instance in the economic well-being or lack thereof of the generality of a society's population has a clear and direct impact on the security

<sup>16</sup> Tonra, Ben and Thomas Christiansen. *Rethinking Social Policy*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, (2004), p. 97.

<sup>17</sup> Ozonnia, Ojielo. *A Shared Future: Approaches to National Cohesion and Integration*. Amani Papers, UNDP, Kenya. Volume I No 3, (2010), p. 91.

of the society. The world is replete with examples of exclusive exploitative economies nay states that are locked in a never-ending cycle of violence, both high and low intensity conflicts.<sup>18</sup> The very existence of poverty, unemployment, is in itself a societal threat.

Broadly social capital can be seen in terms of five dimensions: first, networks-lateral associations that vary in density and size, and occur among both individuals and groups; second, reciprocity-expectation that in short or long term kindness and services will be returned; third, trust-willingness to take initiatives (or risk) in a social context based on assumption that others will respond as expected; fourth, social norms-the unwritten shared values that direct behaviour and interaction; and fifth, personal and collective efficacy-the active and willing engagement of citizens within participative community. These five dimensions manifest themselves in various combinations and shape the interaction amongst the members of a group, organization, community, society or simply network and can be studied through various perspectives.

## 1.7 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed case study and are often done in the subject's real-world context. This gives researchers a good view of what they are really like. Case studies provide rich raw material for advancing theoretical ideas. The study used both qualitative and quantitative data. Secondary data sources were collected through books, journal, articles, and periodicals. This will help to capture what has already been done on national cohesion and national security nexus from a global, regional, national and local perspective; this information will assist in creating a better undertaking of the subject matter. Primary data sources collection will be collected through interview. The primary data will be collected using interview guide the interview guide will be used with the target population that will include key stakeholders in national cohesion and national security issues.

The target populations were experts from various subject matter experts such as government ministries, government agencies, foreign affairs agencies, civil societies, and other cohesion, development, and national security experts in Africa. The study employed purposive sampling.

The collected data was sorted and analysed using document analysis and content analysis techniques, based on the emerging issues under study. Document analysis is a form of qualitative research in which documents are interpreted by the study to give voice of national cohesion and national security nexus in Kenya. Content analysis is a qualitative analytic method for

identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes the main data set in (rich) detail. The final results are presented narrative, bar graphs, pie charts and frequency tables to allow a reader to assess whether or not the interpretation is supported by the data.

## 1.8 RESULTS FINDINGS

Results shows that respondents the fully aware were 95 per cent, unsure 3 per cent and unaware 2 per cent. Additionally, 70 per cent of the respondents indicated that there is a correlation between national cohesion and security nexus. Further to this most of the respondents argue that national cohesion in Kenya is a direct function of human security including social, economic and national security. These findings therefore disprove the hypothesis that, National cohesion and national security have no direct correlation in Kenya. National security is the basis for the prosperity of the State. Only a secure environment is capable of ensuring the functioning of a mature democratic constitutional order, sustainable economic growth, protection of human rights and freedoms, viability of civil society.

The necessary condition of national security is contribution of civic-minded citizens to the country's security and welfare, their preparedness to contribute to its defence under critical circumstances. Most threats are now seen to emanate from internally generated factors associated with a multiplicity of conflicts arising from ethnocentric dynamics and governance related issues that undermine national cohesion and render the state vulnerable to external threats. This conclusion further confirmed by Loury found that with the end of the cold war, threats to a country's security are now largely internally generated, often borne of national in-cohesion and economic under-development.<sup>19</sup> This realization emphasizes the need to recalibrate the understanding of nation cohesion and security within Kenya..

Kenya has experienced a number of historical and political challenges which have significantly hampered the realization of national cohesion and national security for the people of Kenya. This study found that a high number of respondents stated that despite the formation of the National Cohesion and Integration Commission and other bodies mandated to enhance national cohesion, little achievement has been made so. Therefore this study approves the hypothesis that policy on national cohesion and national security are uncoordinated in Kenya.

This study found that there is a nexus between national cohesion in the national security discourse in Africa, and thus concludes that peace and stability is also a pre-requisite to social and economic development. The government's commitment to provide

<sup>18</sup> Tonra, Ben and Thomas Christiansen. *Rethinking Social Policy*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, (2004), p. 97.

<sup>19</sup> Loury, George. Intergenerational transfers and the distribution of earnings. *Econometrica*, (2001), p. 77.

security to its people and the preservation of national security and sovereignty underscores the desire to advance national interests by guaranteeing a secure social economic and political environment for sustainable economic growth.

In the past many African communities have been divided along ethnic lines creating hostility and lack of national cohesion and reconciliation. This has been a major challenge to peace and security this has to imbalances in the social, economic and political development of the country, this is because national cohesion can be a challenge regardless of if a society is experiencing the uptick in developing country growth that has taken place over the last decade. It is thus perhaps not surprising that there is an increasing demand to measure the various dimensions of social cohesion and its evolution over time.

The subject of national cohesion and integration is a process and the result of inculcating and allowing all citizens to make sense and feel part of the same community engaged in a common enterprise, facing shared challenges and opportunities.<sup>20</sup> Despite the formation of the National Cohesion and Integration Commission and other bodies mandated to enhance national cohesion, little achievement has been made so. The situation calls for a policy review if the envisaged goal of ensuring a just and cohesive society enjoying equitable social development under the social pillar of vision 2030 is to be achieved.

## 1.9 CONCLUSIONS

This study examined national cohesion in fostering national security and based on the findings, it concludes that that social cohesion is both a means and an end for improving well-being of citizens around the world. Despite visible economic and social progress in many developing countries, opinion polls suggest that many citizens are unhappy or not satisfied with their current life situation as the world moves out of the worst financial and economic crisis since a century. At the end of the day, measuring social cohesion can help identify factors that contribute to it or reduce it and thereby shed light on policies and instruments that strengthen it. We are only beginning to take note of these.

Some of the specific impediment to national cohesion and integration identified by this policy under these dimensions include: (i) the over-concentration of state powers on the Executive; (ii) weak respect for the rule of law in the context of a weak institutional framework; (iii) widespread abuse of human rights (iv) insecurity, proliferation of illegal arms and cattle rustling; (v) lack of transparency and accountability in the electoral processes; (vi) inequitable distribution of

opportunities and public resources; (vii) poor management of natural resources such as land; and (viii) primacy of ethnic identity over national identity and citizenship. These challenges can nonetheless, be effectively addressed by policy interventions. Although the government has put in place interventions that will address some of the aforementioned challenges to national cohesion and integration – such as the National Cohesion and Integration Act (2008) and the Constitution of Kenya – there is need for a more definite framework within which interventions can be streamlined and rationalized.

## 1.10 RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that the development through the concerned stakeholders to formulate the institutional, policy and legal framework for addressing ethnic conflicts and promotion of national cohesion and reconciliation. The key sector priorities included: Promotion of sustainable peace and security, national cohesion and values and national unity; maintenance of law and order, deterring and defending the country against external aggression; deepening policy, legal and institutional reforms; eradication of alcohol and drug abuse; curbing small arms trafficking and usage; tightening border surveillance; instituting programmes for integration of ex-security personnel; scaling of fight against wildlife crimes; enhancing collection, analysis and dissemination of up to date intelligence information. As part of their development plans, county governments should be required to report on efforts to promote and ensure diversity.

The National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC) should partner with these mechanisms to promote diversity and national cohesion. It is intended that the proper coordination of national cohesion and national security policies will promote prevention, mitigation and preparedness.

It further recommends that in Africa the fact that most cohesion and integration index measures are considered foreign (Eurocentric) and still very nuance in the context of the African continent. This study proposed that scholars and policy makers should now seriously consider developing theory and measurement criteria for social or national cohesion that address the African context. Social cohesion is both a means and an end for improving well-being of citizens around the world.

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