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Analyses

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Women and violence:
The gendered nature of armed conflict

Armed conflicts around the world have gripped the public conscience largely because civilians are not merely caught in the crossfire; they are deliberately and brutally targeted by military strategists. The nature of internal armed conflict around the world, particularly in Africa reveals a disturbing trend of civilians accounting for the majority of casualties, with women and girls becoming increasingly vulnerable in such conflicts. Armed conflicts have devastating implications on people, societies and economies worldwide, with extreme impacts on the lives of women and girls.

The UN General Assembly's *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence* against Women, defined violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life."[1]

Violence against women and girls is an escalating humanitarian crisis across conflict affected countries such as Sudan, South Sudan and the recent clashes in the Tana River District in Kenya. These conflicts continue to amplify the increasing vulnerability of women as targeted casualties in times of war. The targeting of women is a strategy for many militants to significantly weaken their enemies' stability as women are generally perceived as symbols of motherhood. Gender Based Violence (GBV) is one of the hallmarks of conflict, where sexual based violence is an integral part of the pattern of violence inflicted upon targeted communities.

GBV is perpetrated on the basis of gender, which often includes sexual violence committed particularly against women. They are exposed to various forms of violence which include physical, emotional and sexual which have an impact on the

individual and the community at large. For example, victims of sexual violence are subjected to stigmatization by the community and in some cases they are discriminated. Studies of recent conflicts indicate that fighting forces have specifically targeted women, adolescent girls and, to a lesser extent, girl children. These women and girls have been subjected to torture, rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced sterilization and the forced termination of pregnancies, among other cruel acts of violence.

The UN report emphasizes that the nature of these violent acts are closely related to the gender relations in the society.[2] Even after being forced out of their homes and into refugee and IDP camps, women and girls are more so at risk of human rights abuses due to the weakening of existing community and family protection mechanisms. Internally displaced women and girls are subjected to physical and sexual attacks, rape, domestic violence and sexual harassment. They are especially susceptible to gender based violence which has long-term devastating effects on their lives. In addition, essential social services on which women heavily depend for their well-being are greatly disrupted by armed conflicts.[3] Men are generally the main perpetrators and victims of armed conflict, in the same token; women have also played as active participants either as actors or supporters of war.

It is critical that policy makers and practitioners take into account the gendered nature of armed violence, particularly so against women and girls. Women and men experience conflict in different ways which must be taken into account during post-conflict reconstruction. Women and men are involved in conflicts differently, from their access to resources, roles, and decision-making efforts throughout armed conflict phases, as well as different needs, interests and priorities. African societies are highly patriarchal where traditionally and even in contemporary contexts, women are inferior to men 'naturally'. As such they have to occupy a subordinate social position in their male dominated society. Despite some watering down due to modernization and westernization, women are still reluctant to rebel against gender discrimination under the guise of traditional orthodoxy.[4] Patriarchy has been embedded to the very core of the society promoting male superiority over women at every level[5]. It is systemic over every aspect of life and is thus considered normal. Women have been psychologically shaped so as to internalize their own inferiority which therefore explains why after many decades many women feel subordinate to the men.

In times of armed conflict, women are disproportionally affected mainly due to their biological and societal roles and are exposed to sexual based conflicts. Patriarchy, serves as an ideology and structure of domination as it exerts its violent power physical and/or non-physical violence against women. The control of women has been extended to denial or restriction of opportunities for education, creativity, economic control, health and political representation.

The Kenyan context

The recent inter-communal conflict between the Orma and the Pokomo of the Tana River Delta in August and September 2012 reveals the increasing vulnerability of women as direct and indirect casualties of war. The Tana River clashes indicate that current warfare rarely differentiates between men and women. What is not clear is whether the killing of the women and children was indiscriminate or was selective. Unmistakably, however, is that women accounted for the highest number of casualties from the clashes. Militants have often carried out attacks on women and children with the goal of destabilizing, displacing or threatening the survival of the targeted communities. The strategy is to attack the very fabric of the society as most cultures identify women as symbols of motherhood and custodians of the society. It can therefore be argued that the targeting of women by militants is to destroy the reproduction and therefore continuity of the community.

The Tana River conflict was instigated by a number of underlying causes such as competition for resources such as land, water and power, primarily political power.

Some analysts have described the conflict as purely political, aimed at displacing the supporters of their opponents in preparation for the upcoming general elections. These inter-community attacks can be viewed as each party trying to weaken and terrorize the opponent so as to gain advantage and control over resources. Deliberate attacks on women may function as a substitution to attacking the culture of the entire society and is often considered extremely effective since large members of the community are displaced from their own homes.

The impact of the Tana River clashes on the lives of women has far reaching implications on future post-conflict reconstruction. Not only were lives lost but women were forced to flee and seek refuge in camps and other forms of temporary shelter away from home putting them at greater risk of rape, physical assaults, prostitution and other forms of violence against women. According to a study undertaken by Mwaniki et al.[6], there is a strong correlation between displacements and violence against women mainly because family and communal protective structures have been destroyed. Additionally, these women face possible rejection from their families and the larger community and thus left destitute without a home and source of livelihood. Evidently, women are generally disproportionally affected during times of war largely because of their 'inferior' status in the society. Even though all women experience some level of discrimination and subordination in all aspects of life, it is more pervasive in some contexts for example in traditional communities.

Structural violence is created and sustained by cultural norms and therefore gender can be constituted as an integral aspect of structural and cultural violence, for gender forms the basis of structural inequality.[7] Male violence is constructed as a legitimate form of control embedded in the power relations between men and women. Norms and practices of control and subordination of women are enshrined within existing structures setting conditions of repression and discrimination thereby sustaining gender inequality. The domination and subordination of women in the society amplifies the conditions for the social control of women mainly as wives and mothers, and now as deliberate targets of war. Studies have often been centred on a gender-neutral discourse oblivious to the reality that armed conflicts are highly gendered and must be analysed through a gender-sensitive lens.

The way forward

Despite the clamour to achieving considerable gains on many of the MDG targets which will soon be changed to SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals), progress has been painfully slow on promoting gender equality and empowering women. Gender justice necessitates ending the inequalities between women and men entrenched in family, community, market and state structures. It also requires that institutions are accountable for tackling the injustice and discrimination against women[8].

Researchers such as Lerner argue that patriarchy is a human structure, and thus can be changed[9]. Gender relates to different learned identities associated with masculinity and femininity; therefore since gender roles are learnt, they can be transformed. Societies must be willing to embrace structures that ensure gender equality and equity so as to protect the rights of the women, often considered as a vulnerable group.

A wide range of literature reveals that inequalities, particularly gender inequalities, in the society are highly linked to armed conflict occurrences. The argument is that equitable societies tend to be more peaceful largely because the norms of inviolability and respect that define equal relations between women and men are rooted in the social, political and economic structures.[10] The concept of equality applies here by ensuring that all people must have equal political, economic, and social access in order for each person to be able to participate equally in society. Since gender issues determine access to resources and control, it is on this very same basis that access and power are limited and inequality is justified and maintained. Although the power and role of women vary across cultures and societies, women are always unequal in both the economic and political spheres.

The international community has recognized the urgent need to prevent and bring an end to violence against women. Women and development emerged for the first time in the 1970s, as an issue in the international agenda. Before this, women were largely perceived as mothers, housewives and dependents of the men in society.[11] Women were not accounted for in the agenda as it was generally assumed that the benefits would automatically benefit both men and women.

However, there has been a significant change since the 1980s as women's issues and experiences have taken center stage through various national and international conferences, particularly the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, China in 1995. Furthermore, the UN Security Council adopted Resolutions 1325 and 1889 on women, peace and security, and Resolutions 1820 and 1888 on sexual violence in armed conflict. These four Resolutions offer a framework through which women are not only protected from violence, but are empowered to participate in peace processes and have access to justice and security. African countries must take initiative to capitalize on these milestones by cementing gender equality and equity within political, social and economic structures.

Evidently, despite the increased prominence of women's issues in the domestic and international contexts, integrating gender issues is a complex and contested process that continues to encounter resistance from organizations, societies and individuals. Gender Based Violence is a critical human and national security issue which must be addressed to facilitate the protection of vulnerable persons by providing social security. Gender perspectives in Africa reveal male biases in culture and structures that discriminate against women. There has been more of talk in institutionalizing women's needs and experiences into policies, rather than taking effective and appropriate action.

In the context of conflict, an understanding of gender dynamics is crucial to appreciate the existing power relations between the men and women. Gender sensitivity should therefore be applied as an integral part of approach to conflict analysis, prevention and post-conflict reconstruction. Gender specific issues and gender power dynamics must be considered in all response interventions to ensure gender inclusive cooperative security practices and norms.

To create gender equality, the difficult task of changing the culture and structures must be incorporated at all levels from the basic family structure to the state. Leaders, policy makers and all persons must aim to foster sustainable peace by not only reducing wars and conflict but by supporting societal changes in all aspects of life.

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After a year…
Analysing South Sudan's political economy and international relations

The latest development in the post-separation relations between the republics of Sudan and South Sudan is invariably the signing of a new peace deal in Addis Ababa on 27th September 2012. This new agreement, facilitated by the African Union High Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) covered most of the unsettled issues between the two countries after the people of South Sudan voted for secession in January 2011, leading to the declaration of an independent state of South Sudan in July 2011. The sticking points on trade, banking, oil transportation, security arrangements in border zones and status of citizens' on either side are more or less resolved[1].

However, the overall balance sheet from the three weeks negotiation process does not reflect a comforting status for peace, security and development, especially in South Sudan. This is despite the powerful voices of support and celebration from leading western nations including the United States, the European Union and Britain as well as the United Nations; all of whom made public congratulatory statements within hours of the signing of the agreement.

In an article written soon after the end of the negotiations, AUHIP chairperson and former South African president Thabo Mbeki expressed displeasure with the African media for their ambivalent treatment of worthy news made by Africans on African problems[2].

The notable failure to reach an agreement on the contested Abyei region and the border demarcation between the two countries means that Juba will not be planning for development with any less uncertainty as has been the case in the last one year. The current projections by the government of South Sudan allocates up to 34% of annual public expenditure to conflict prevention and security in the next three years. Last year, this proportion was 38%. (MoFEP, GoSS, 2011). With persistent unease over the status of Abyei, little change is expected on these budgetary projections, yet allocations for economic and social/human development are 18% and 12% respectively for the same period.

The context and constraints of state building in the new republic are only marginally (if at all) improved by this new agreement. Granted, the resumption of oil exports from South Sudan will alleviate economic strains experienced by both countries since South Sudan stopped production of 350,000 barrels a day early this year. For Khartoum, Juba's acceptance to pay the sum of US $3.028 billion in direct Transitional Financial Assistance (TFA) over three and half years to mitigate the financial effects suffered by Sudan after South Sudan seceded with the oil resources, is an additional gain above the $ 8.4 per barrel it will charge for transportation through its infrastructure.

The real implications and dividends of any agreement crystallize upon its implementation. The history of Sudan-South Sudan relations depicts a graveyard of agreements. In fact, the last phase of the war between the two erstwhile regions of one country was triggered by non-implementation of previous agreements[3]. In the fullness of time, this agreement may or may not achieve intended goals, depending on the parties' commitments to its implementation.

International interests in South Sudan

What does this new development mean for socio-economic development in the new republic, beyond the resumption of oil revenue and where does it place international actors and particularly China's role in this?

We have noted the failure of the agreement to change the huge government expenditure allocations to conflict prevention, peace and security in the short-run. Current reliance on external support for the financing of reconstruction projects in South Sudan will continue. China is a key player in this. Unlike the other international donors, Chinese approach to peace and stability emphasizes socio-economic growth through investments in infrastructure, as opposed to other (political) means of enforcing democracy.

In Angola, China financed infrastructure and physical facilities (re)construction projects amounting to US $ 7.5 billion in oil-for-infrastructure deals between 2004 and 2011(Saferworld, 2012). The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Ghana have also been beneficiaries of Chinese resource-guaranteed loans for infrastructural development. Like these countries and others in Africa, South Sudan is looking up to China for resource-guaranteed loans and investments both in the short–run and in the long-term.

President Salva Kiir visited Beijing in April 2012 on a mission to attract Chinese loans and investments especially in the development of a new oil pipeline linking South Sudan to the Kenyan port of Lamu that would earn the land-locked country total independence from the republic of Sudan. The deal was not sealed. Earlier in the year, a prominent member of the Politburo of the Communist Party of China, Li Yuanchao had visited Juba and made promises of additional support to the country in excess of the US$31.5 million grant for the year 2011.

China's level of aid commitment to South Sudan is unclear, but there are projects already agreed upon by both parties and tentatively enlisted for funding by China. They include the construction of a new South Sudan embassy in Beijing, the revamping of Juba airport, two major road projects and a power line connection from Ethiopia. Unconfirmed reports during President Kiir's visit to Beijing peddled a figure of US$ 8 million being an infrastructural development package for South Sudan agreed upon for Chinese financing. There has been no confirmation of such agreements from the Chinese government. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that China will be a prominent actor in post-independence developments in South Sudan, not least because of Beijing's immense interests in the country's oil.

In 2011 for example, China imported 66% of all oil produce from Sudan and South Sudan, while the rest went to Malaysia, Japan, United Arab Emirates, India and Singapore, each taking less than 10% in descending order (Kuo, 2012)[4]. Just before the shutdown of oil production by South Sudan in early 2012, China was deeply involved in negotiations between the two parties to avert the crisis. Those efforts failed and the South stopped oil production after all. Instructively, China's intervention continued even after this. China's foreign minister Yang Jiechi held a meeting with President Salva Kiir while Jia Qinglin – a senior CPC official- reached out to President Omar El Bashir (ICG, 2012). Western nations have also been deeply involved in the behind-the-scenes machinations towards the final agreement signed in Addis Ababa.

China in between the two Sudan

Clearly, China finds itself in unique circumstances placed between the republics of Sudan and South Sudan, without the option to desert the position given her interests in oil resources. Before the secession of South Sudan, China was openly leaning towards the North. Indeed, China blamed the United States for the eventuality of the split of the Sudan, claiming the US supported the SPLM war against the North as well as the secessionist agenda towards the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).

It is a different terrain now for China. Beijing has to curry favour with Juba, the new holder of the oil wealth. At the same time, she is keen to keep commitments of support made to Khartoum before the split. Yet both parties believe-and rightly so-that China is well placed to positively influence events and processes aimed at achieving good relations between the new neighbours. The relationship between Sudan and South Sudan also take internal security dimensions in both countries, beyond the obvious cross-border security[5]. In the South in particular, oil production may be disrupted by instability, especially in the oil producing areas.

The one thing that has to change in this context is the 'non-interference' mantra of Chinese foreign policy. Combinations of history and geography have thrown up outcomes that make it difficult for China to focus on the oil, without intervening in the relationship between the two countries and the internal affairs on either side, especially in the new republic of South Sudan. For a start, China has little choice but to be among the closest monitors of the implementation of the recent agreement signed in Addis Ababa.

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1   For a detailed account of the agreement terms and items, see for example, an article by Amanda Hsiao, dated 9th October 2012 and posted on various international development sites on the internet.

2   But the response obtained after putting this question to a prominent newspaper editor in Juba during a research interview was illuminating, framing the matter differently from the charge on African media. He explained the challenges faced by the international press in entering and covering events in Addis Ababa in general.

3   There have been a number of publications - especially individual accounts (mainly by South Sudanese SPLM leaders) of their experiences in the conflict, presenting drivers of conflict t various historical conjectures. Non-commitment to agreements-seen as betrayal by the North-has been a major reason for the persistence of the conflict. See for example, Abel A.(2003). Sudan: Too Many Agreements Dishonored.

4   After the separation, more than two-thirds of the oil fields fell in the South. To maintain same amounts of oil imports, China would have to obtain most of the supplies from the new republic of South Sudan.

5   We will not delve into these dimensions in this article, but the emergence of insurgent groups on either side of the border is often linked to instigation by either of the two countries.

Somalia post Transitional Government Opportunities and challenges ahead for the new government

After numerous delays the newly appointed Somali Parliament elected on September 10 the new president, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud. The head of state recently appointed the Prime Minister, Abdi Farah Shirdon Said, who will have the responsibility to select a new council of ministers. These were important achievements for the country's institutional progress, since they mark the end of a 8-year transitional phase during which the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) made no effective step to counter the spread of Islamist insurgents led by al-Shabaab.

The TFG was established in 2004 together with a 275-seat Transitional Federal Assembly (TFA) whose main task was the reconstruction of institutions in the war-torn Somalia and leading the country to restoration of democratic order. Among other objectives, the TFG was supposed to facilitate the adoption of new constitution to be submitted to popular referendum. In spite of the numerous renewals of

TFG's mandate, none of these aims was achieved. Corruption and disputes among TFG leaders paralyzed institutional activities and seriously affected the government's international credibility. According to the UN Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea, TFG's troops took part in the diversion of weapons into the illegal market. In addition, the Prime Minister Office estimated that a humanitarian aid worth $72 million was unaccounted while further $ 250 million were not registered in the budget[1].

The long-awaited presidential election, however, sparked new tensions in Mogadishu after the unsuccessful attempt to kill the president. A few days after taking office as head of state, in fact, three suicide bombers attacked the temporary presidential residence, killing an African Union (AU) soldier[2]. Even if no political leader was targeted, the action was considered a serious threat to the country's security and a way of demoralizing the Somali people who had waited 21 years before having a permanent government.

Hassan Sheik Mohamud said that al-Shabaab reprisals would not have the result of compromising the democratic process achievements in Somalia. AU and Kenyan forces are struggling to pull Islamist insurgents out of the country and in the last months they managed to gain ground on several strategic sites previously under al-Shabaab's control. Among other strongholds, rebels lost Elmaan and Kismayo seaports but many analysts say they will go on fighting and undermining security in several areas in Somalia[3].

The new president in a recent statement confirmed his intention to put security at the top of the political agenda and to remove the causes that make al-Shabaab an attractive movement for so many Somali young people.

Internal situation and previsions in the road map.

One year after al-Shabaab retreated from Mogadishu due to military incursions by African Union (AU) and TFG's troops, the Somali capital struggles to return to normality. The expiry of TFG's mandate was scheduled for August 20 and by the same date the road map was supposed to be fully implemented with the formation of the Parliament and the election of the Head of State. The political process was delayed and the Somali people had to wait until September 10 for the Parliament to elect a President. Even the Parliament was not yet completely formed, since the list of 70 candidates was rejected owing to serious suspicions of corruption and intimidation that characterized the selection process[4]. The chronic instability and the lack of security in many areas of the country made it impossible to hold political elections and the task of selecting 275 members of Parliament was assigned to the elder clan leaders. During this phase numerous irregularities have been registered, in efforts to ensure majority support for presidential aspirants.

In spite of the election of the head of state and the prime minister, analysts remain sceptical of the future government's ability to make a difference. In other words they reckon the new organ will be nothing more than a simple reshuffling of the former one[5].

On the other hand, in the country, especially in Mogadishu, many improvements begin to be tangible. Since last October, Somalia has seen an unprecedented deployment of forces fighting al-Shabaab militias with the support of military apparatus from Kenya and Ethiopia. Armed interventions were aimed at restoring security and creating an environment that will enable government to completing the road map.

Notwithstanding the remarkable progress made by the coalition, al-Shabaab remains a serious threat not just in Somali territory, but also in the border areas and in the neighbouring countries. They are still capable of obstructing the democratic progress due to the fact that in many areas in Central and Southern Somalia, although not in authority, they still have territorial influence and a substantial number of armed militants[6].

The necessity of restoring internal security acquired great relevance not just for the Somali political agenda, but also for most of the main international and regional actors. The absence of a capable central government facilitated the rise of al-Shabaab in the control of a large segment of the territory through the provision of services but mainly the use of force. Apart from controlling almost the whole country, these rebels managed to become the major obstacle to international trade and development projects. TFG's troops never managed to avoid neither the spread of armed militias in the country, nor the consolidation of Al-Qaeda's terrorist network.

The election of a new president after more than twenty years of chaos and conflicts is only the first step to start the reconstruction of national institutions. As soon as a new government will be fully operational, it will have to make great effort to erase the legacy of the transitional political period and avoid the mistakes of the previous regime. In the short term the government has to create the framework for a real functioning state. Among the main priorities there is the reform of the judiciary and security sectors in order to reinforce the rule of law. Well-trained police and security forces are essential to assure public confidence and security. Demilitarization of the society, reintegration of former fighters and arms control are important conditions for stability and long-term social reconciliation. The restoration of law and order require the existence of efficient organs to counter all forms of illegal practices (corruption, intimidation, political violence, etc.) in order to build public trust in the nascent institutions.

Recognition of Islam as a local reality

Somalia will have to devote a lot of resources to improve the living conditions of the population, severely hit by the worst drought in sixty years. The recovery of national economy is among the main priorities. Measures aimed at enhancing agriculture development are needed to reduce extreme poverty and food insecurity. The delivery of social services, like health, education and environment are also a huge task for Somali institutions.

These are the reasons why the situation in Somalia needed to be addressed with a new approach and faced with joint efforts of the international community. During the last year, in fact, many conferences and meetings took place to discuss the timing and mode to implement the road map and accelerate the overcoming of transitional government. United Nations, UA, European Union and several Western countries such as UK and USA, supported a series of initiatives to facilitate TFG's task. Two conferences were held in London and Turkey that addressed how to establish stability in Somalia. Road map solutions should have been fully implemented by August 20 in order to allow the presidential election. Among other provisions, the road map required the adoption of the federal Constitution, the formation of Parliament and the demobilization of armed militias.

Currently, there is a provisional Constitution that was adopted by the Somali Constitutional Assembly. The draft contains several important provisions that are likely to become controversial issues. Among other solutions, the Constitution confirms Islam as the sole State religion and any law in force in the country must meet Sharia's principles (art. 2), which remains the supreme source of legislation (art. 4)[7].

This recognition of Islam as a local reality cannot be wished away but is an aspect that the international community needs to understand and work with to facilitate peace. The text also provides the federal structure of the state, recognizes the principle of equality for all citizens and stresses the value of fundamental freedoms and human rights. Female circumcision, for example, will be banned and abortion will be allowed to save the life of the mother[8].

Political instability in Somalia is still one of the main priorities in western countries' foreign policy. The Head of UK government, David Cameron, has often stressed the necessity of intensifying international struggle to counter the threat of terrorism and piracy. On this basis London took the occasion to hold a conference in

February. At that time, TFG members and the main regional actors were convened to discuss not just internal security, but also development and humanitarian situation. Somalia is the country most severely affected by 2011 drought and there are still one million refugees, most of them hosted in Kenyan and Ethiopian camps. Despite the fact that winter rains were the most abundant in the last three years, humanitarian assistance will be necessary throughout 2012 because of persistent food insecurity. But this will be pegged to accessibility of the affected regions thus guarantee of security needs to be enhanced and sustained to enable communities carry out livelihood activities. The achievements of the transition go on.

In spite of numerous obstacles and delays, the process of reconstruction of Somali institutions goes on. The momentum that has been created with the election of a new president, the appointment of a Prime minister and the subsequent nomination of the cabinet needed to implement reforms be maintained. The aforementioned conference in London, followed by other initiatives, witnessed the effectiveness of the support assured by international community. This mediation facilitated the sign of agreements in the regional context in order to strengthen the alliance within AU fighting against al-Shabaab.

In June an important Memorandum was signed in Addis Ababa between AU and Kenyan Government aimed at inserting Nairobi's troops in the military forces of African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM)[9]. This was an important achievement for TFG and AMISOM, not only because it allowed the enhancement of military power, but also because Kenyan forces had been operating out of TFG's control since their arrival in October 2011. The Kenyan forces overwhelming majority in terms of equipment and training allowed significant military advantages against al-Shabaab, but provoked a long series of reprisals. In December, in fact, at least 15 bombings were reported in north-eastern Kenya with the use of the well-known Improvised Explosive Devises.

During the last months, however, Islamist insurgents suffered a series of successive military defeats. At the beginning of October 2012 Kenyan Defence Forces (KDF) and AMISOM troops, after several days of military operations, managed to capture the city port of Kismayo, a strategic site located 170 km from the Kenyan border previously under al-Shabaab's control. In late September, over 200 fighters surrendered in Jowar and accepted to join the government programs aimed at inserting former rebel militants in Somali armed forces. In spite of the fact that so far none of the Shabaab's commanders surrendered, such a big number of defections is an evidence of the ongoing splits in their ranks that are weakening the movement.

Many Somali and AMISOM expert are convinced that al-Shabaab is faltering not only in military terms but also due to the lack of financial resources to face a long-term armed confrontation. More and more Somalis criticize al-Shabaab for obstructing humanitarian assistance during last year drought, thus contributing to worsen the plight for several million people. Moreover, according to the many defectors, the Shabaab are waging jihad only for keeping their power, not for defending Islam. They are still committing serious crimes against Muslim Somali people in the name of religion. In other words, their influence on communities is based much more on violence and terror, rather than shared ideals and objectives[10].

Much progress has been made in terms of institutional reforms. At the end of July 2012, a Constituent Assembly, formed by 825 members selected among local clan leaders, began to work for a draft constitution. Among the main provisions in this text there was, apart from the formal recognition of Sharia's general principles, the insertion of women in any national institution. Moreover, the provisional constitution marks the equality of all citizens before the law without prejudice based on religion, gender, economic and social status, etc[11].

In that occasion many issues were discussed, such as selection mode for the 275 members of Parliament, integrity and protection of Technical Selection Com-

mittee and procedures for the election of Speaker, Deputy Speaker and President[12]. The participants, given that persistent rumours of corruption within transitional institutions were circulating, stressed the necessity of adopting measures to end illegal practices in the selection process in order to avoid compromising the legitimacy of the Parliament. This was one of the hardest tasks for the Somali leadership. Even if the selection was targeted to keep out of the Parliament people involved in armed violence and those without basic education, many illegal practices have been witnessed. Corruption and threats to individuals were used to select members.

Many former al-Shabaab militants entered the ranks of national police and security forces after demobilization and disarmament. The Somali government has recruited a certain number of former fighters into special intelligence squads to record information on al-Shabaab tactics, but many military experts have already expressed their disapproval on this solution. Abdullahi Guure, a retired officer of Somali security forces, underlined the necessity to deal cautiously with defectors, since some of them could still be loyal to the movement or even act as informants.

The Somali people were expecting a different approach and significant changes in treating these issues. A simple reshuffle of ancient rulers, in fact, would not help Somalia acquire credibility among its potential partners and donor countries.

One year after the ousting of the militias from Mogadishu, there have still been several suicide attacks and targeted assassination. Journalists seem to be the worst affected category. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), Somalia remains the most dangerous country in Africa for information and media operators. Since the beginning of the year 13 journalists have been killed and more than twenty seriously injured. The latest attacks occurred on 27 and 28 September 2012, when two operators were shot dead[13].

Notwithstanding the persistent threat represented by Al-Qaeda-linked al-Shabaab militants, Somali people are trying to react. Many residents and members of the Diaspora begin to open back shops and new trade activities are populating the streets of the capital. In the last months there has been a growing demand of housing, while many schools and hospitals resumed their operational capacities.

Meanwhile, outside Mogadishu al-Shabaab was forced to withdraw its militias from many strategic sites such as Afgoye, Balaad, Baidoa and parts of Gedo, Middle and Lower Juba[14].

However, all these military achievements including the seize of several al-Shabaab's strongholds do not mean the final defeat and the overcoming of the threat they represented. UN experts and AMISOM officials are convinced that this group will still be the main challenge for the country's security. Recent AMISOM achievements are expected to provoke further fragmentation of the movement and lead to changes in their armed actions, for example the resort to low-level, high-intensity attacks against AMISOM troops and civilians.

Even in case of final military defeat, stabilization in Somalia would not be an automatic step. There are many other armed groups and militias threatening peace process and stability. The Lower, Middle Juba and Gedo regions are facing serious crisis due to the claims of political leadership. Azania, Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jamaah (ASWJ), Harti clan and Ras Kamboni groups are the main candidates. The growing tension among these groups may lead to future conflicts and, on this purpose, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) called a meeting on June 26 to discuss political issues and find a peaceful solution to the crisis[15].

Even if the Kenyan contribution enhanced the military power of TFG-AMISOM alliance, bringing the number of troops to 17,000, al-Shabaab's members intensified guerrilla actions and attacks. Moreover, UN have reported that new terrorist training sites have been discovered in Puntland, while many jihadist groups in Kenya, Tanzania and Yemen are strengthening their links with the Somali extremist groups.[16]

Recommendations.

Somalia is at a crossroads. This year might bring the overcoming of the transitional political phase, but there are great challenges to face:

- The country has been experiencing political chaos since 1991. The restoration of peace and security is the main priority in order to rebuild institutions and democracy.

- The newly appointed government and parliament have not been chosen by Somali voters but after selecting local clan leaders, thus violating one of the fundamental principles of democratic orders. Their legitimacy is questionable and it will be necessary for Somali institutions to assure a greater role of the citizens. In this regard, free and democratic election must be held as soon as possible.

- Military joint efforts should not only aim at defeating al-Shabaab's resistance in Somali territory. Many analysts are convinced that this movement can count on solid links with jihadist groups in many areas in the Horn of Africa. They are not isolated, but a part of a terror network. At this purpose, Somali government should strengthen collaboration with regional and international actors involved in the fight against terrorism.

- Corruption, bribery, arms smuggling and other illegal practices seriously affected the transitional institutions' legitimacy. Somalia is not yet able to bear the burden of its administration and still need external support. A greater level of transparency is required to gain the trust of international actors and donor countries. Somali decision-makers are expected to enhance their commitment to consolidate the culture of legality and rule of law in order to build reliable institutions

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Construction of religious identities and the fear of Islam in Kenya

This analysis begins with a background on religious identity formation, exploring the advent of Islam and Christianity in the coastal region of East Africa and the influence the two religions had on the formation of the modern state in Kenya. It further present the prevailing socio-political factors influencing inter religious relations and makes recommendations on how this can be improved further.

Religions have a central role in the definition of the *self* and in providing answers to many questions that confront the human mind especially on the origin and the afterlife. This has an effect on the human mind developing certain positions over issues hence defining the identity of an individual and how they relate to their immediate and distant environment.

All human beings acquire different forms of identities as they traverse time and space. Hauge describes identity as the distinguishing character or personality of an individual[1]. Most religions have a well structured system of ensuring that the history and dogma is handed down from one generation to another through a process of socialization hence guaranteeing continuity. This then becomes a very critical opportunity in the development of religious identity. While efforts are put in place by institutions to ensure uniformity of information, the natural variation of the human mind manifests itself clearly amongst individuals in any schooling system paving the way for ideas otherwise considered repugnant to the norm to find their way into the minds of those under instruction. This is a very fundamental characteristic of any identity formation process

Social comparison theory assumes that people see themselves and their group in a positive rather than a negative light. Collective and similar characteristics picked up during socialization process define collective identity and form broader in-group attributes that enhance and are a main source group relations and solidarity. They also help in the formation of individual identity and this occurs because individuals are motivated to win and preserve a positive self-esteem.

People will join other groups if positive self-esteem is not preserved. If people cannot leave a group, they protect the group by denying negative characteristics of the group, or reinterpret them as positive self-concepts[2]. This in essence means that once individuals derives their identity and see themselves as belonging to a certain group then they start perceiving how different they are from others hence setting the stage for potential inter-group conflict.

The in-group ideological connection acts as a cushion against which members deal with challenges confronting them. From our earlier argument, i.e. religion[3] provides humanity with answers about the unknown reinforces the strong believe that individuals have in religious ideologies. The ideologies provide them with the much needed comfort as individuals who belong to a group. The members believe they will be fine in their afterlife if they meet certain well laid down conditions. They thus act and are expected to act and even confirm to established ethos. They believe (informed by strong ideologies) that theirs is the only vehicle through which this can be achieved to a great extent informs inter-group conflict. The fear of the unknown, and of being ostracised from the group (with negative repercussions awaiting one who dares leave the group) are some of the factors inhibiting drop-outs from such groups.

From the foregoing it is apparent that the aspect of deriving answers and affirmations from formal groups determines to a great extent the level of comfort that an individual derives from within. When emotions are pegged to believe then the tenets or dogma of such groups receive unwavering commitment from individuals. When religion becomes a source of pride evident in a "feel-good" kind of attitude in comparison with others, it creates room for conflicts with those that contrast the groups believe system. Individuals within are likely to develop a feeling of entitlement and

responsibility to fend off any opposition either directly targeting the group or existing in latent antagonism to the group's ideologies.

Muslim-Christian relations have largely provided the arena in which such antagonism is experienced. This to some extent constitutes an explanation of the prevailing global tension between Islam and Christianity.

The advent of Islam and Christianity

Islam arrived much earlier than Christianity on the East African coast, although further North, existing evidence puts the advent of Christianity in Ethiopia at the first centuries AD. Experts put the arrival of Islam to the period around 830 AD. Ibn Batutas who in his travels recorded events on the eastern coast of Africa in AD 1332 further serves as evidence of the early arrival of Islam in the area. Nevertheless, Islam largely remained an urban and coastal phenomenon for many years. While there is still contention as to whether the conversion of the local people (at the time said to be practising zoarostranism) to Islam was largely peaceful or violent, the entry of the Portuguese in the eastern Africa coast in 1498 was indeed a marked historical event laced with many episodes of violence and untold suffering for coastal inhabitants.[4]

Violent confrontations between the Portuguese largely seen as representing Christianity and the Arabs representing Islam set the stage for events that would for many years after define relations between the Islam and Christianity in the eastern coast of Africa. While the Portuguese interest at the coast was mainly political and economic conquest, there is little evidence that this was accompanied by a Christianization agenda. Their main agenda was dominated by the desire taking possession of the trade-route to India and this explains their little effort to venture inland.

The Arabs on the other hand portrayed a long term agenda that was accompanied by political, economic and religious activities, aimed at facilitating their stay and dominance of the region. Their active engagement in slave trade inland may have contributed to the common believe that Islam propagated this trade amongst individuals and communities termed as *Kafir*,[5] hence contributing to resentment against people of Arab origin evident to date in some sections of Eastern Africa.

To most Muslims, the advent of western colonisation in Africa around 1884-1885[6] signified a quest for religious dominance by Christians. While the colonial powers did not have a visible religious agenda, the entry of missionaries prior to the scramble and partition of Africa pointed to a direct connection between the missionaries and colonial powers. It is definitely no coincidence therefore that most areas in Africa were colonised by the western states, home countries of the said missionaries, almost immediately after their entry in Africa.

By the time Kenya was attaining independence strong religious identities had formed across the country infiltrating the social, political and economic order. Currently the total Christian population in Kenya stands at 31,878,818, while that of Muslims is 4,305,016[7]. With both religions scrambling to win converts, the competition has on several occasions advertently or in-advertently caused friction. But the Muslim-Christian relations need to be looked at against the socio-political background of an emerging independent state. While interrogating the said relations one should not lose sight of the influence of the historical political order which to a great extent determined how the two religions view each other.

The pre-dominantly Christian colonial administration which formed an alliance with Christian missionary groups to a large extent determined how Islam was nationally to be viewed in later years. It also shaped the Christian-Muslim relations in Kenya. As Arabs who were Muslims focused mainly on trade, Christian missionary groups engaged in providing services mainly building of schools that helped them with evangelization. This phenomenon had an impact on the education status of Muslims and Christians.

With the western mentality being perceived as the norm, Islam was handled with contempt as it did not originate from the west and so had no place in a replica of western civilization (read colonial Kenya). Being a minority religion, and carrying with it a reminder of the slave trade heritage within its Arab populace, Islam continued to be viewed with suspicion especially in up-country Kenya. This suspicion has been persistent and somewhat nurtured by on-going global initiatives that to a large extent led to the profiling of Kenyans who profess the Islamic faith. Unfortunately, this defines the relationship between the populations that profess the two faiths. Ndeda, in what appears to be a precise prediction of events that are currently confronting the country, asserts the following;

> *Despite this diversity of religious identities, it seems that the government of Kenya gives more attention to the mainline Christian churches and some brotherhoods of Islam in its nation state narration. Consequently, minority religious identities seem to be subordinated against, a fact that impinges on the human rights of some citizens of the Kenyan post-colony. This scenario could be a recipe for violent sectarian confrontations*[8]

While the national identity was emerging in the early years of independence, it was not in unison with the existing religious identity. It is therefore valid to conclude that colonisation planted a seed of discord in inter-religious relations by favouring certain main stream religious denominations and disregarding others. This situation has been at play almost to the book by political leaders of independent Kenya who carried forth and perfected the liking of westernization while frowning upon anything that seemed to represent divergence.

Political participation and religious identity

Both Christian and Muslims found common ground in the call for constitution change that characterised Kenyan politics from the mid 1980s onwards. The formation of Ufungamano Initiative in 1999[9] to some pundits presented a forum where religious and political commonalities were to be explored in order to bridge the existing gap and create greater understanding and tolerance between the two faiths. This was never to be as both sides pursued a political agenda defined by identity based inclinations rather than consensus. The initiative collapsed in 2002 when an otherwise little known group, the *Kenyan Church*[10] influenced a section of the Christian fraternity in the initiative to reject the inclusion of the Kadhi courts in the proposed constitution.

The latent tension between Christian and Muslims became increasingly evident and overt from this point onwards with episodes of violence playing out in the struggle for a new constitution. Due to existing relationship, Christians viewed the demands for inclusion of Kadhi courts in the constitution with fear and suspicion with talk that Muslims were learning towards radicalization and out to introduce *shariah* law in Kenya. The Evangelical Christian community argued that eliminating the explicit declaration that all religions were equal in Kenya would allow for Kadhis' Courts to be embedded in the constitution paving the way for Islam to be elevated above other religions[11].

Global war on terrorism and local repercussions – the source of fear?

At the global front, the war against terror led by the then American president George Bush, and his British counterpart Prime Minister Tony Blair intensified. The Bombing of the American Embassy in Nairobi in 1998, which received condemnation from the Muslims fraternity in Kenya and across the region, served to reinforce the silent perception that *most terrorist are Muslims so Islam support terrorism*. The 1998 bombing therefore remains an event that not only led to great interest in the mind of the common Kenyan in attempting to understand terrorism, but also to a large extent drew the dividing line and redefined the relationship between Muslims and Christians in Kenya to date.

While the war on terror took an extremist stand thanks to the American political influence, locally attempts were made to craft an act of parliament to counter terrorism in the country. This move received immediate opposition from the Muslim fraternity citing ambiguity, unclear definition of terrorism, and potentiality of the act creating room for violation of human (read Muslim) rights. This opposition to most Christians served to identity Muslims with perpetrators of terrorism preparing the stage for Christians to oppose any proposals emanating from the Muslim fraternity without necessarily weighing its importance vis-a-vis existing societal challenges.

The state approached this process with a duality of thought while trying to respond to immediate need i.e. to preserve civil rights, and the urgent need for legislation to counter increased threats[12]. Currently the country is on the brink of having the anti-terrorism bill enacted after years of negotiations. Even in absence of legislation that directly deals with terrorism, counter terrorism efforts have led to profiling of the Muslim population. They are often selected from a crowd and subjected to vigorous security checks owing to the fact they can be physically identified to be members of the Islamic faith.

Most Christians in Kenya believe that even if the Kenyan Muslim community did not participate directly in the terror attacks, they abetted the crime and harboured fundamentalist who operated in the country among Muslims by making it possible for them to slip in through porous borders, carry out the attacks and leaving without being apprehended[13].

Other attacks such as the bombing of a beach hotel in Kikambala in November 2002, grenade attacks in a largely Christian led public rally on the constitution referendum, in Nairobi in August 2010, attacks on churches by suspected al-Shabaab[14] adherents, and the targeting of churches during riots by Muslim youths such as the riots that broke out after the killing of sheikh Aboud Rogo in August 2012 in Mombasa, point to the expanding divide between the faiths and the potentiality for further violence[15].

To most Christians subsequent arrests made mainly of youth purporting to be Muslims silently further enhanced the direct linkage between terror and Islam. The association of Islam with violence has led most Christians to harbour fear against the faith; a position that is largely misinformed by the participation of a few individuals in advocating for violence while using religion as a mobilization tool. On the other hand, extremist groups claiming affiliation to Islam have continued to attract young people who are pre-occupied with radical teachings crafted by individuals to meet their own agenda while promoting violence against innocent citizens. The pretext is always that doing so will earn one a heavenly reward more precious than their own lives. Shrouded in religious philosophy such teachings appear attractive to poverty stricken youths who harbour grievances against society.

Leaders of such groups have come to realize that young people need a robust identity well grounded within a revered institution[16], so they present the groups as a *brand identity*[17] that is widely recognized to the extent that it becomes a source of pride with premium value attached to its membership. This draws many youth and provides them with a platform for expression hence earning their confidence.

While most Muslims view the fight against terrorism as being deliberated skewed to work against them, the Christian fraternity has not done much to dispel these assertions and state their stand on the matter. On the other hand, little condemnations of terror attacks, followed by a long spell of silence by Muslim leaders, have led Christians to view them with suspicion. This situation works against spirited calls for intensified inter-religious dialogue in the wake of increased threats to the nation as a whole.

So far inter-religious dialogue in Kenya has remained an elitist's affair with very limited trickledown effect to ardent followers of the two faiths who have continued to maintain very robust positions over pertinent issues. The limited opportunity for compromise has in actual sense fuelled fear and suspicion amongst the two religions, contributing to the prevailing state of affairs. Need therefore

exists for a structured dialogue between the religions that should be accompanied by commitment to reaching out to respective followers while preaching the need for co-existence.

Recommendations:

From the foregoing discussion, it is evident that the relations between the two religions to a great extent are determined by their history and identity formation process has also impacted negatively on nationhood with the effects felt right up to the individual level. The following are therefore proposals aimed at contributing to a rectification of the situation for posterity.

There is need for a convergence of religions for dialogue structured within a sound national policy framework aimed at improving relations between religions while countering the present threat to state stability and development. This will ensure that resolutions made in such a convergence are binding to all.

State involvement in inter-religious dialogue is inevitable given the state of security in the country, though the extent of its involvement needs to be determined by the religious fraternity so as to maintain the clear line between state and religion and how the two interact.

Discussions on how Christians and Muslims relate needs to move from board rooms to the streets. Ordinary Christians and Muslims should be involved in dialogue to promote understanding and co-existence. The effect of deteriorating relations is felt heavily at this level hence the need to have local level community inter-religious dialogue as part of the civic education curriculum.

The adoption of peace education at basic education levels and above has never been as urgent as it is now. This will ensure that the radicalization of young minds is stalled while paving the way for society to reflect on challenges that affects the country in an effort to enhance human security.

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5   Arabic term common among Muslims used to describe non believers

6   The Berlin conference of 1884-4 triggered the scramble and partition of Africa amongst European nations

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10 Though links with other Christian sects was largely unknown and contentious, evangelical Christians readily identified with it.

11 Rachel Sweet Vanderpoel; Religious Equality in Kenya? Adjudicating the Constitutionality of Kenya's Kadhis' Courts. The religion and diversity project p. 6

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14 This is a group in Somalia presenting itself as having a concrete political agenda laced with religious ideologies that seek to ensure the installation of its leadership as political leaders governing under Islamic law through forceful means.

15 Kenyan for Peace with Truth and Justice: Statement on the killing of Sheikh Aboud Rogo and the subsequent violence. 6th September 2012

16 This explains the choice of religion as a perfect vehicle for recruitments by extremists

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NEWS

Increased political violence and insecurity in Kenya

Different regions in Kenya have recorded inter-ethnic conflict. In Tana River Delta, at least 110 people were killed and scores of people have been displaced following inter-ethnic clashes between the Orma and Pokomo ethnic groups in August-September. Most of those killed were women and children. It is alleged that politicians from the region are responsible for inciting and organizing the violence. One member of Parliament from the region has been charged in court. The security forces are also being accused of failing to act early to prevent the violence as the communities had communicated fear if attack several months before.

In neighbouring Mombasa, violence protests erupted after the killing of a Muslim cleric by unknown assilants. Following the killing, youth protesting engaged in acts of destruction that led to the burning of four churches. The event revealed presence of sectarianism between Muslims and Christians even as leaders called for calm resolve. Immediate efforts to bring together religious leaders from the Muslim and Christian faith groups failed over disagreement on the agenda which was inclined towards politics and not peace. The government set up a team to probe the killing of the Sheikh who was on the US terror suspect list.
Source (s): Daily Nation, 30th August 2012 and http://allafrica.com/stories/201209131217.html

Rebel kill soldiers in South Sudan

A convoy of South Sudan army was attacked and 24 soldiers killed in Jonglei State. It is also reported that 17 more soldiers are missing and another 12 were wounded. The attack is believed to have been carried out by a one of the militia groups. The South Sudan government is yet to complete a comprehensive disarmament exercise a year after its secession. It is also reported that some ethnic communities are resisting the disarmament. It is also reported that the soldiers involved in the disarmament have been involved in criminate activities such as rape.
Source: http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/08/27/us-southsudan-clashes-idUSBRE87Q0CY20120827

Sudan and South Sudan in agreement

The Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan signed nine agreements on a range of issues that they have been negotiating since 2010 initially in accordance with the Post-Referendum Arrangements negotiations provided for in section 67 of the Southern Sudan

Referendum Act, 2009 as elaborated upon in the Mekelle Memorandum of Understanding of 23 June 2010. The Parties have also been engaged in the negotiation of outstanding Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) issues, and have now reached several Agreements relating to CPA and post secession issues.
Source: African Union

New government in Somalia

Somalia's nine years transitional government ended peacefully with the convening of a new Parliament, election of a new president by the Parliament and and the subsequent appointment of a prime minister by the President. Although not directly elected, over 200 members of Parliament who were nominated by clan elders were sworn in. The new Parliament is perceived to be professional and it is hoped that it will be more transparent and accountable. An interim constitution was also ratified by a constituency assembly and it has yet to be ratified by the public.
Source: allafrica.com http://allafrica.com/stories/201210180018.html and New York Times http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/somalia/index.html

RESOURCES

Somali women and peacebuilding

The article discusses the powerful role women have played in promoting peace in Somalia. It cites how the civil war led to change of social roles that led to new responsibilities and opportunities for women in their communities. This included active participation in public service through peacebuilding, leadership and statebuilding processes. During the war when clans were engaged in conflict, women were able to act as mediators between the clans they are married to and their birth clans. This different engagement provided women with a chance of dealing with armed conflicts often only initiated by men over power, resources or for other reasons. Acting out of the need to have stability for their families and communities they changed "Somali women need peace not war". For more details on the role of women in peace building in somalia.
Read the report on Insight on Conflict – *http://www.insightonconflict.org/2012/08/somali-women-peacebuilding/*

Think global, act global: Confronting global factors that influence conflict and fragility

This paper is the principal output of the research project Global Factors Influencing the Risk of Conflict and Fragility which was conducted by a consortium of universities and think tanks: The aim of the project was to open a new dimension for by identifying how global influences on fragility and conflict can be confronted effectively. Its aim is to stimulate reflection and discussion during a consultation period with a broad range of stakeholders on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding.

The consultation aimed to identify and agree on a few promising initiatives for strategic international action that can confront some of these global factors. The proposed entry points offer starting points for discussion. They are all in need of greater detail and better linkage with existing initiatives. The OECD invites key stakeholders to engage on these issues. A final version of this paper will be published early 2013, reflecting inputs, debates and corrections.
For a detailed preliminary report *http://www.saferworld.org.uk/downloads/pubdocs/Think_global_act_global_Synthesis_120912_graphics_final.pdf*

Reporting Conflict: The media coverage of Mombasa Republican Council

The Media Council of Kenya has been conducting conflict sensitive journalism training workshop to enhance media coverage on sensitive issues. Subsequent to the trainings, the Media Council of Kenya has been monitoring the print and radio coverage of the Mombasa Republican Council with the intention of having a critical

reflection that will help improve the quality standards of Kenyan journalism. The report contains two monitoring reports that analyze both the print and radio coverage of the MRC in May 2012, whereas another article article by veteran journalist provides long-term observations of the Kenyan reporting on conflictridden issues such as the MRC.

To access the full report follow the following link *http://www.kictanet.or.ke/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Reporting-Conflict-Report2.pdf*