



Book Review

Elixir Book Review 120 (2018) 51243-51244

Elixir
ISSN: 2229-712X

Transitional Justice and After Kenya's Experience with IDP Resettlement and Peacebuilding since the 2007/2008 Post Election Violence

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Article Info: Received: 10 May 2018; Received in revised form: 29 June 2018; Accepted: 9 July 2018

Introduction

Nzau, Mumo (2016). *Transitional Justice and After: Kenya's Experience with IDP Resettlement and Peacebuilding Since The 2007/2008 Post Election Violence*. CUEA Press, Nairobi. 240 pages, USD 50. Paperback, ISBN 978-9966-015-46-4.

This book, *Transitional Justice and After* by Nzau Mumo, set out to examine Kenya's transitional justice since the 2007/2008 post election violence. It provides an insight into whether resettlement was the best solution to the IDP problem in the Rift Valley and Kenya as a whole. In so doing, the book puts into perspective the peacebuilding processes undertaken in the Rift valley of Kenya as a result of Post Election Violence, the challenges faced and the contributions of IDPs resettlement programmes to peacebuilding in Kenya. A critical analysis of the book indicates that the author, to a greater extent, achieves the stated purpose of the book. This book is well researched and written in easy English to understand and therefore should be recommended for scholars at various levels in the field of Peace and Conflict Studies as a resource book. The author of this book, Dr. Mumo Nzau is a Fulbright scholar who holds MA and Ph.D degrees in Political Science from the State University of New York at Buffalo, USA. He is a senior lecturer in Political Science at the Catholic University of East Africa (CUEA) and Adjunct Faculty at the United States International University (USIU). The book is arranged thematically into *resettlement and peacebuilding, retrogressive account of internal displacement phenomenon in Kenya, resettlement and peacebuilding in the rift valley region since 2008 and critical analysis of Kenya's experience with IDP resettlement as a transitional justice mechanism*. All these are elaborately discussed in an easy-to-understand language.

Kenya has had a long history of IDPs right from independence (p.32). However, not much was done to address this until the 2007/2008 PEV that rocked the country. At this point, the actors in the conflict and various stakeholders were reached to provide way forward. The main challenge was inadequate literature on transitional justice (in the Kenyan context). From the literature review, it is evident that "systematic academic literature on this topic (with reference to Kenya) is very scarce and lacks deep analytical rigour. As such the researcher synchronized such works with contemporary theorization on conflict management and transitional justice." (p.6). It is probably just coincidence that this book was published at a time when Kenya was in dire need of information that would help in handling the quagmire of resettlement of the PEV IDPs who were still languishing in the camps. Therefore, the book is very significant as it contributes immensely to the knowledge of the wider field of Peace and Conflict Studies, based on the Kenyan experience. This book is both timely and crucial as far as better informing the theory and practice of managing conflicts, transitional justice and post-conflict peacebuilding processes (both locally and internationally) is concerned. The author identifies the problem of IDP resettlement caused by historical injustices on resource allocation and distribution. Other causes include floods, famine and outbreak of disease. The author has provided detailed background information about the IDP resettlement at various levels (both locally and globally) with specific information on how each of these cases has been addressed.

The author begins by introducing the problem under investigation, outlines the objectives and core research questions of the study before addressing the theoretical premises that inform the study. It also gives an elaborate account on the prelude to post election violence, how it all started and the efforts of the Grand Coalition Government in the resettlement of the Post Election Violence IDPs. The author also addresses the methodological outlook of the study.

The author goes ahead to review the relevant literature. This is done in three contexts: global, Africa and Kenya. Nzau concurs with Brun (2006) who argues that "cases of resettlement of displaced population are the better option particularly when IDPs can neither return to their homes nor remain in temporary camps." Generally, transitional justice can be achieved through hybrid courts in conjunction with truth telling processes and carefully designed reform sectors. Politically induced internal displacement in Kenya remained relatively low scale in the 1990s until after PEV of 2007. However, few works addressed the issue in depth though they lacked the broader theoretical and policy disposition.

The author has given a very comprehensive step by step account of internal displacement and resettlements in Kenya since independence. He notes that "there were minimal electoral related cases of violence and subsequent displacement between the years 1963-1992" (p.61). This became more rampant between the years 1992-1997. It later reached its peak between the years 2007-2008 PEV following the disputed general election. This was aggravated by the little or no concern to address the root causes of these problems. He also discusses the peacebuilding efforts undertaken to try to mend the country that had torn apart.

The author further discusses the institutional and policy environment with regards to resettlement of IDPs and peace building both globally and locally. Generally, the institutional environment for prevention of electoral violence in Kenya has improved since the year 2007.

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However, it is clear that constitutional provisions and legislative mechanisms created to manage and oversee the electoral affairs may not bear any significant fruits due to Chief Executive's (i.e. the incumbent president's) influence on the commissioners assuming their roles in these offices. It is imperative that a good constitution should not only lay out a foolproof environment that is capable of guaranteeing a well governed electoral environment but also provide a roadmap for resolution of disputes and spearheading peacebuilding.

The author outlines IDP resettlement and peacebuilding in the Rift Valley region since 2008. It is notable that the post election violence can be highly attributed to the bad governance and political decay that saw skewed allocation and distribution of resources. However, the initial efforts to end the conflict and secure a return to normalcy were partly successful.

Additionally, author provides a critical assessment of the internal displacement process in Kenya since 1884. He categorizes these internal displacements into three phases: the first phase in the late 1800s and at the beginning of the 20th century. The second phase occurred during post independence period reaching its peak in 1990s through to 2007 and the third phase that was influenced by factors such as localized political situations that may or may not be related to the first and second phases. Other factors that may induce internal displacement include floods, drought, famine and outbreaks of epidemics, factors which the author elaborately discusses.

In general terms, the book has achieved its goal by critically analyzing the challenges that faced the IDPs resettlement, establishing the contribution of IDPs resettlement to the whole process of peacebuilding and by exploring the prospects for resettlement of IDPs as a path to restorative transitional justice in Kenya. However, the book warns that "the question of internal displacement is a multifaceted and complex affair that is shaped by historical, political, cultural, economic, policy and institutional factors and actor" (p.200). This affected the coordination of the resettlement process hence subsequent lack of inclusivity. The author, therefore, suggests that for a successful resettlement of IDPs as a restorative transitional mechanism, there is need to make it an all-inclusive process hence not relegated to the government of the day alone. It further advocates for a well premised true commitment to forgive and forget as this is the true end-objective of restorative transitional justice and peacebuilding.

The book has successfully managed to balance between facts and emotions to remain objective in highlighting the plight of the IDPs in a manner that is understandable. It is, therefore, difficult not to like the author with his unpretentious forgiving style. However, to be sure, there are some weaknesses in the book. In terms of structure, it's more of a thesis report than a book and to some extent, there are some printing errors, repetitions or omissions appearing on the general introduction (p.1), chapter four (pages 111, 114), chapter five (pages 121, 129, 136, 137, 141, 158, 173).

Nevertheless, the book provides all-round, well-meaning and policy oriented accounts of how Kenya handled the repercussions of the 2007/2008 post election violence, specifically the IDPs resettlement issue as a restorative transitional justice mechanism. The book adds a bunch of knowledge to the (already existing knowledge in the) field of Peace and Conflict Studies. More specifically, it sheds light into the transitional justice (Kenyan perspective) which has, for a long time, remained blurred. This book is well researched and written in a language (English) that is easy to understand and, therefore, should be recommended for scholars at various levels in the field of Peace and Conflict Studies as a resource book. The book provides a valuable and absorbing window into transitional justice-providing the Kenyan perspective at the global level.