

Devolved Governance and Implications on National Security: Exploring the Role of Clan Elites in the North Eastern Region, Kenya

By

Elmi Abdi Rashid¹, Sirera Anne Merecia², & Handa Okumu Stephen³

¹(Department of Security, Diplomacy and Peace Studies – Kenyatta University-Kenya)

²(Department of Security, Diplomacy and Peace Studies – Kenyatta University-Kenya)

³(Department of Security, Diplomacy and Peace Studies – Kenyatta University-Kenya)

Corresponding author email:

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to examine devolved governance units in Kenya and Implications on National Security, using the role of clan elites in the North Eastern Region as a focus for illustration. The period of study was on the devolution period of 2013 to 2022. The contention of the article is that in North-Eastern region, Kenya, devolution was operationalized in an environment of historical inter and intra clan rivalry. In this setting, the citizenry had unbalanced power as encapsulated in the clans they belong to. This brings into question whether devolved governance may yield the expected benefits in such environments of potential uneven power. It was therefore critical to evaluate the outcomes of devolution in the context of clannism amid elitism in north-eastern region and its attendant implications on Kenya's national security. Using a mixed method approach, the study employed a household survey, key informant interviews, and a review of relevant documents to gather data. A total of 932 participants from Wajir, Mandera, and Garissa Counties took part in the study which was conducted in May and December 2022. The findings indicated potential capture of local governments by elites, with the monetization of politics and the entrenchment of clan-based politics, nepotism and cronyism playing a key role with significant implications for security. The results further showed that, elites use hegemonic approach to whip clannism to their support to the detriment of security in the region. The study recommended that, the County Governments in the North Eastern region should adopt laws and regulations that will permit equity and inclusion in leadership roles that are representative of clan diversity. The study also recommended that national institutions such as IEBC and National Cohesion and Integration Commission [NCIC] should fully implement their mandate to ensure diversity representation in governance. To maintain peaceful interclan coexistence and hence national security, it was recommended that county governments in the North Eastern region should implement more public goods initiatives and public participation.

Key words: Kenya, Devolved Governance, Elites, Devolution, Security, Clannism

Devolved Governance and Implications on National Security: Exploring the Role of Clan Elites in the North Eastern Region, Kenya

By

Elmi Abdi Rashid¹, Sirera Anne Merecia², & Handa Okumu Stephen³

Introduction

Although there is a consensus that devolution can facilitate equitable distribution of resources, cultural values such as clannism may be a hindrance. Moreover, elites within clans may influence the sharing of the benefits of devolution. This could in turn cause marginalisation and grievances amongst the large sections of the citizenry and hence insecurity. Collins (2006) conceptualise clans as social groups of people who have shared patrilineal hereditary relationship and/or connected by virtue of marriage, adoption, and long-term friendship. As such, belonging to a clan can be because of shared experiences, interests, and strong relationships. It also implies that the idea is unstable and subject to change when interests shift. Therefore, clannism could be conceptualised as the sense of affinity to a social group for the purpose of enjoying the benefits of shared experiences, interests, and relationships. Through clannism, therefore, one could mobilize other members of the group to operate collectively to attain shared goals. However, within clans, we have elites that have the power to significantly affect clan operations to either help or hinder other members from achieving common objectives.

Higley (2008) describes elites as a small group of people within major social institutions who wield substantial power to influence the results of political processes. Abdullahi (2021) contends that elites can be understood to enjoy the support of the bases they emanate from particularly in determining socio-economic and political disposition of their communities and thus national security or lack thereof. In this case, in a devolution setting, it can be inferred that elites lobby and influence voting patterns of their bases (in the case of this article, clans) to ensure their placement at the centre of power and resources division. Subsequently, elites in the context of clannism have significant influence on the linkage between devolved governance benefits and national security. This could contradict the principles of devolution which are anchored on a legal framework to ensure distribution of power and privileges of governance from a national authority to those at lower levels (Burbidge 2019). The participatory approach as envisaged in devolved governance is assumed to help in consolidating local support for national political and development agendas and hence, national security. However, the influence of devolution in assuring security remains contested (World Bank, 2017). Notably, what is often not reflected upon is whether the power and resources benefit the clan members on an equal basis to enhance security or the elites pursue selfish interest to the detriment of peace.

David and Richard (as cited in Singh, 2015) and Holmes (2015) perceive national security as a situation in which a country is free from external threats. Through this definition, the military might of a country is paramount to guarantee national security. However, Holmes broadens the definition of national security to include the interests of both the public and the country. This suggest that the concept of national security can be dynamic as interests tend to shift over time and therefore, might differ across different nations or groups within a nation. McNamara (as cited in Singh, 2015) in his conceptualisation of national security acknowledges

the centrality of military power but adds that development is necessary to assure security. This implies therefore devolved governance benefits which underpin development are critical in assuring security. Singh (2015) contends national security may encompass context specific multifaceted issues. To this end, it is envisioned that through devolved governance a nation could effectively address contextual issues to enhance security. Accordingly, many nations, including Kenya, have adopted devolved governance with the desire to address context specific issues to achieve among other goals, national security.

According to Wanyande (2016), Kenya's decentralized system of government was operationalised in March 2013 pursuant to the requirement of Kenya's 2010 Constitution Articles 1(1), (3) and (4), Article 10(2)(a) and Chapter 11. The scholar explains that this resulted in a national government and 47 sub national governments. Key to transition to devolution, was the necessity to address issues like ethnic dominance of the state, ethno-regional development, marginalisation, and the politics of ethnicity which had occasioned violence hence insecurity (Mbori, 2021). Indeed, the North-Eastern region (Mandera, Garissa and Wajir Counties) has had a history of marginalization and under development relative to other regions in Kenya (Wanyande, 2016). The marginalization of the area first with the colonial government then by the successive regimes is evidenced by poor policing, lack of proper road network, which has resulted to lack of investment and thus high levels of poverty. The conditions have made the region vulnerable to insecurities with far reaching effects on national security. In this context, it was visualised that devolution could help the region address contextual issues, such as marginalisation, to spur development and enhance national security.

Devolution was introduced to the region amid clannism and influential role of elites (International Crisis Group [ICG], 2015). Elitism, in a devolution context, creates a possibility that power and resources could become a preserve of a minority while marginalising the majority. For example, In Pakistan, Tunio and Nabi (2021) claim that devolution had not realised its theoretical benefits due to elitism, patronage, corruption amongst other negative behaviours exercised by dominant groups particularly, elites. This study seemed to agree with Tunio and Nabi since the elites in the area of study have continued to manipulate the election of leaders through provision of financial support, engaging in voter bribery and blocking campaign rallies of disliked politicians amongst other acts of election misconduct as witnessed in the 2017 elections.

In Central Asia, Gullete (2010) observe that elites play a mediating role between their clans and others. In this regard, they act as agents who negotiate power and resource distribution on behalf of their clans. As such, through their disposition, they can precipitate conflict amongst clans or in the converse assure peace. In Somalia, Musse (2020) claims that clan elites have had a huge influence in the realisation of the objectives of federalism and its impact on national security. The author contends that elites exploit their clan bases to pursue their agenda in the national front. In Kenya, Mbori (2021) claims that elites have always been at the centre of Kenya's constitutional reforms and intended outcomes. As such, for political expediency, the author argues that elites use their ethnic/clan affiliations, to incite and leverage on partisanship to reap maximum rewards. In the North-Eastern region, which has many Kenyans of Somali ethnic extractions, elites consist of clan elders and Islamic religion leaders such as Sheikhs and Imams (Abdullahi, 2021). However, there has been little reflection on how clan elites in the region influence devolved governance and the implication on national security. Accordingly, the study

focused on exploring the role of clan elites in the north eastern region, Kenya in informing the sharing of devolved governance benefits in a context of clannism and thus, ramifications for national security.

Statement of the Problem

Devolved governance in Kenya has not ensured equitable power and resource distribution in local settings as envisioned. As a result, it has not led to inclusive and participatory prioritisation and implementation of developmental concerns at the grassroots. Devolution has also failed in playing its role of providing a framework for preventing or solving conflicts though deepened consultations and unanimity at the grassroot level. The results are that there is no implementation of homegrown inclusive solutions and this has led to more disgruntlement and enhanced national insecurity at large.

In North-Eastern region of Kenya, devolution was operationalized in an environment of historical inter and intra clan rivalry. In this setting, the citizenry had unbalanced power as encapsulated in the clans they belong to. The devolved governance has not been in a position to yield the expected benefits in such environments of potential uneven power from the outset. This notwithstanding, there is a paucity of knowledge of how the different clans in north-eastern region of Kenya have morphed in a landscape of new socio-economic and political era anchored on devolution and thus, influence on security.

Most clans use collective power to influence distribution of the benefits of devolution to their advantage. Seemingly, devolution has (re)introduced and enhanced potential practices of clan-based patronage, rent-seeking, and corruption at local level in the north-eastern region. This has been a major player in influencing security in the region and nationally. What this means is that the outcomes of devolution in the context of clannism amid elitism in the north-eastern region is impacting Kenya's national security calling for the urgency of a study such as this one.

Objectives of the study

1. To establish the benefits that devolved governance had yielded in the context of clannism in the North Eastern region and implications for Kenya's national security.
2. To analyse the influence of clannism on the distribution of devolved governance benefits in North-Eastern region and its consequences for Kenya's national security.
3. To evaluate the role of elites and clannism in determining the sharing of devolved governance benefits and its ramifications for Kenya's national security.

Methodology

The scope of this article was confined to the role of clan elders, politicians, and religious leaders in influencing the sharing benefits of devolved governance. In the evaluation, the study focus is on the role of these elites in five prominent clans found in the north eastern region, Kenya namely: Ogaden, Degodia, Ajuraan, Garre and Murule in the period 2013-2022. Using a mixed method approach, the study's quantitative data was collected from 893 households [HH]. This sample size was drawn through clustering the region into 22 administrative locations (Sub Counties). Lottery method was then used to select four sub counties to sample from each County of interest which were Mandera, Wajir and Grissa. This accounted for 54.5% of total Sub Counties. In the HH, further clustering based on clans, age and sex was done. Identification and

Citation: Elmi, A. R; Sirera, A. M & Handa, O. S. (2024). Devolved Governance and Implications on National Security: Exploring the Role of Clan Elites in the North Eastern Region, Kenya. *Journal of African Interdisciplinary Studies*, 8(1), 5 – 20.

sampling of various members of a particular clan was through snowballing. Remarkably, representativeness in terms of gender and age groups was attained. The age groups of interest were youth (18-34 years), middle aged (35-59 years) and the aged (60 and above years). Accordingly, the age group sampling was proportional and in line with Kenya National Bureau of Statistics population census figures of 2019. To collect qualitative data, 39 Key Informants [KI] were sampled through purposive sampling of various cadres of local leadership and security agencies.

Three data collection instruments were used to gather information. These instruments were a household survey questionnaire, an in-depth interview guide, observation guide and a documentary review. The household survey questionnaire consisted of both open and closed ended questions. The closed ended questions were of Five (5) Scale Likert type with responses ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Notably, the data collection tools satisfied all validity facets such as face, construct, and content validity through methods such customisation of indicators drawn from literature review and peer review from scholars and practitioners of devolution and security. The data collection period was in the months of May and December 2022 from 12 out of 22 sub counties of the north eastern region.

Findings of the Study

The study sought information on the influence of elites in North-Eastern Region on voting patterns, sharing benefits of devolution and control of the design and implementation of legislations and policies by the County Assembly and implications on national security. Data was collected and analysed and the findings are as demonstrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Influence of Elites in North-Eastern Region on Sharing Benefits of Devolution and impact on National Security

| Item | SD | D | N | A | SA | Total |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|
| Elites determine clan voting patterns in favour of their preferred candidates in elective offices thus recentralising power to specific individuals while marginalising the majority hence creating national insecurity | 10.9% (97) | 27.8% (248) | 7.1% (63) | 43% (384) | 11.3% (101) | 100% (893) |
| County government awards benefits of devolution e.g., tenders, scholarships, grants etc unfairly to clan elites thus leading to national insecurity | 11.8% (105) | 24.4% (218) | 12% (107) | 30.5% (272) | 21.4% (191) | 100% (893) |
| Clan elites control the design and implementation of legislations and policies by the County Assembly to reflect their interest thus prejudicing concerns of the majority resulting to social agitation for inclusion hence national insecurity | 15.3% (137) | 26.3% (235) | 13.4% (120) | 31.2% (279) | 13.7% (122) | 100% (893) |

Source: Survey Data, 2022

From Table 1, it can be seen that a majority (54.3%) of the respondents from the HH believed that elites determined clan voting patterns in favour of their preferred candidates in elective offices. This resulted to recentralising power to specific individuals while marginalising the majority, hence creating national insecurity. The findings indicate that the minority (38.6%) of the study participants from HH strongly disagreed or disagreed. An interview with informants KI 23 and KI 30 indicated as follows;

Traditionally, clan elders would determine who would vie for election and how the clan would vote but recently, elites use a mix of cash, influence and promises to sway decisions in their favour. For instance, they would say, if you vote for me, I will give your clan this and that position. Bribes to other clans are also made for one to be voted in. There is one MP who spent Kenya Shillings 70 million in such bribes. Obviously, a large chunk of this cash goes towards mobilisation, transport and feeding expenses of the voters who are mostly nomadic pastoralists (KI 23: December 2022).

Devolution has brought about a new clan called money that is in the hands of the elite particularly, the governor. Money that is in control of the governor has completely changed the relationship dynamics in the north eastern region. For example, in the county of Mandera where a former governor was told by clan

elders not to run, he told them, he will run and win. He later defiantly participated in the next elections, used a lot of cash and was re-elected to the consternation of the clan elders (KI 30: December 2022).

The remark by KI 23 seems to allude to a reducing influence of clan elders. The remark also seems to suggest a growing influence of politicians in the north eastern region. The words by KI 30 that ‘former governor was told by clan elders not to run, he told them, he will run and win’ seem to infer a growing influence of politicians and their boldness when confronting traditional influencers, the clan elders. Both KI 23 and 30, allude to the centrality of deep financial pockets in informing the growing influence of politicians in influencing voting patterns by clans.

The significant influence of deep pockets in acquiring political power brings into play the possibility of inequitable political representation through discouraging the participation of non-wealthy politicians and/or not well-resourced clans, election of incompetent persons, and the prominent role of patronage in governance. This could result to local insecurity with a possible effect on national security as elites, through their money, could engender circumstances where decisions prioritize personal connections and influence rather than greater good. In such an instance, the disregard of greater good could result in agitations amongst the populace which could be expressed in form of violence hence insecurity.

To further buttress the majority view that elites determine clan voting patterns thus creating possible conditions for national insecurity, another KI 20 remarked.

We have failed spectacularly in public education on voting There is also high level of illiteracy in the north eastern region of almost 70%. Therefore, assisted voting is a common place. So, for the pastoralists in the region first they are mobilised by their clans, and then the elites within the clan help them to vote. Therefore, the clan through the elites will always know how you voted or as it always happen, the elites will make the ignorant voter vote according to their whims (KI 20: December 2022).

The words by KI 20 stating that ‘we have failed spectacularly inn public education on voting’ are significant. That no and/or inadequate voter education takes place denies the ordinary citizenry their political rights and further makes them vulnerable to making ill-informed judgement in voting. Indeed, in a clannism context, lack of voter education reinforces the power of clan elites in governance decision making while consigning ill civic educated majority to political exclusion. Moreover, when people do not understand voting processes, they consider them unfair thus perpetuating feeling of marginalisation and unrest hence, insecurity.

The words by KI 20, that there is ‘high level of illiteracy in the north eastern region of almost 70%’ are also significant. Wesonga (2015) puts adult literacy level for the region level at 8%. Since education is crucial in altering deeply rooted cultural views that are picked up from one's environment (Altugan, 2015), the high levels of illiteracy may potentially ingrain clannism prejudices and make one vulnerable to influence of the elites, which could be negative, hence leading to insecurity. Moreover, low levels of education further make the masses to be vulnerable to making ill-informed judgement in voting. The words by KI 23, ‘so the clan through the elites will always know how you voted or as it always happen, the elites will make the

Citation: Elmi, A. R; Sirera, A. M & Handa, O. S. (2024). Devolved Governance and Implications on National Security: Exploring the Role of Clan Elites in the North Eastern Region, Kenya. *Journal of African Interdisciplinary Studies*, 8(1), 5 – 20.

ignorant voter vote according to their whims’, paints a picture of an intimidated voter forced to vote in certain way due to scrutiny by clan elites. It also paints a picture of a helpless voter, one who has no freedom of choice hence political insecurity. It points to manipulative behaviour of elites in getting their kinsmen from their clans vote the way they see fit. Indeed, empirical evidence as adduced by Holcombe (2021) shows that independent voters tend to vote differently when alone as compared to when under the influence of elites. In such circumstance, the scholar contends, voters tend to vote along the preferences/ political persuasion of the elites. Therefore, it can be argued that through undue influence of elites, voters are manipulated to reinforce existing socio-economic inequalities and clan cleavages particularly when clan identity politics is used. This has an effect of fuelling grievances due to inequalities and animosity from minority clans due to inequitable representation hence, insecurity.

According to Table 1, it can be established that a minority of respondents (36.17%) did not believe that the north eastern region's county governments unfairly awarded benefits of devolution, such as tenders, scholarships, grants, etc., to clan elites thus leading to national insecurity. This may be due to several factors, including inadequate information regarding the extent of elites' preferential treatment, the respondents' sincere belief that such awards were given fairly, or the allure of clan identity, which has pre-empted and influenced their perceptions of fairness. That said, to support the minority view, a respondent remarked thus.

Majority of the times, the beneficiaries are individuals and not clans. There are some tenders where irrespective of the clan, the person who is given the tender is the person who can give a kick back. Sometimes you are told that the right-hand person is Mr A, B or C. He is the sleeping partner who determines how the benefits are shared and kickbacks sourced. This person is not necessarily from the Governor’s clan but is usually from the Somali community (KI 1: December 2022).

The words ‘there are some tenders where irrespective of the clan, the person who is given the tender is the person who can give a kick back,’ as attributed to KI 1, attest to the entrenchment of corruption in devolved governance. Corruption, in a context where different clans and individuals have different wealth levels and access to devolved resources, could perpetuate the intra and inter clan divide and thus create insecurity. This is so as the unhealthy might not have an opportunity to access the benefits of devolution hence leading agitation for equality which might lead to insecurity.

Contrarily, a majority (51.85%) of the respondents agreed strongly or agreed to the assertion that county government awarded benefits of devolution e.g., tenders, scholarships, grants etc unfairly to clan elites thus leading to national insecurity. To buttress the majority view, KI said the following.

Unfortunately, clans applaud once an elite from their clan get benefits such as tenders even if they don’t get to enjoy such benefit. The fact that one person from their clan has become rich, even if he doesn’t give back to the clan, the clan is happy. In any case, the benefits are a return for their investment after having bankrolled the campaigns of the politicians in power (KI 8: December 2022).

The words by KI 8, ‘unfortunately, clans applaud once an elite from their clan get benefits such as tenders even if they don’t get to enjoy such benefit,’ could mean entrenched clan-based identities in evaluating performance of devolved governments in the north eastern region. This might imply a sense of clan pride and loyalty which underlines deeply ingrained social cultural norms of the clans. The quote, the fact that one person from their clan has become rich, even if he doesn’t give back to the clan, the clan is happy’, attests to the strength of clan identities. It confirms the gullibility of the members of the dominant clan to the machinations of the elites. It is also reflective potential pride in dominating other clans through socio-economic and political means. This has the potential of exacerbating existing inter clan inequalities and reinforcing perceptions of marginalisation resulting in insecurity.

The words by KI 8, ‘in any case, the benefits are a return for their investment after having bankrolled the campaigns of the politicians in power’, is an example of the enormous amount of money elites spend on political campaigns. This means that the public in the north eastern region—especially members of the ruling clan(s)—are robbed of their civic consciousness and personal agency to vote against their better judgment through the resources that are invested in the campaign period. It may also mean that the public, having been invested on during the election period, abdicate their responsibility to provide checks and balances. Thus, by reducing scrutiny and accountability, this lessens participatory governance as intended which in turn, may precipitate unstable peace hence, insecurity.

From Table 1, it can also be concluded that a minority (41.66%) of the respondents from the HH were in strong disagreement or disagreement with the idea that clan elites in the north eastern region control the design and implementation of laws and policies by the County Assemblies to reflect their interests consequently prejudicing concerns of the majority resulting to social agitation for inclusion hence national insecurity. In support of the minority view, a respondent remarked.

The counties only do very little legislations. If you ask me, how many legislations have so far been made? I would say maybe eight. No serious legislation and policy making takes place in the north eastern region. In any case, I have not seen any controversial legislation that supports a particular group of people while prejudicing others (KI 7: December 2022).

The words that ‘the counties only do very little legislations’ could be indicative of limited competencies of the persons elected to devolved governance positions. This is because, clan mobilization and support may have played a crucial role in the elites' ascent to power and not necessarily their ability to articulate and put governance issues into action. It could also be suggestive of elites who wish to consolidate power through ensuring enabling frameworks that would require devolution to be rolled out as envisaged are not there. This has an impact of enhancing elite capture and marginalising the majority with negative consequences for intra and inter clan social harmony hence, insecurity.

The majority (44.91%) of respondents from the HH believed that clan elites controlled the design and implementation of legislation and policies by the County Assemblies in the north eastern region to reflect their interests, ignoring the concerns of the majority, thus resulting in

Citation: Elmi, A. R; Sirera, A. M & Handa, O. S. (2024). Devolved Governance and Implications on National Security: Exploring the Role of Clan Elites in the North Eastern Region, Kenya. *Journal of African Interdisciplinary Studies*, 8(1), 5 – 20.

social agitation for inclusion, and thus national insecurity. To support the majority view, a KI said the following.

By default, elites control design and implementation of legislation and policies. This is because, all this take place at the County Assembly and at the assembly, the MCAs have been elected courtesy of the influence of the elites or through their financial support. Therefore, the MCAs will always do the bidding of the elites (KI 9: December 2022).

The remarks by KI 9 seems to suggest the lack of independence by MCAs as they are dependent on clan elites for financial support and influence. This may have a huge implication on their responsibilities as the representatives of the people and in carrying out governance oversight duties. Indeed, the responsibilities of MCAs as contemplated by the Kenya Constitution 2010 Article 185 is to represent their respective electorates in duties to include legislation, oversight, and deciding on development and resource allocation question. Through legislating responsive policies and laws, MCAs can address contextual issues such as inclusion and equity in governance and thus, occasion peaceful coexistence leading to peace and security. Therefore, by abdicating their responsibilities and becoming subservient to clan elites' influence, MCAs run the risk of excluding the majority through their legislative actions or inaction. This could result in social instability and insecurity because people may feel marginalized and excluded, which could lead to calls for more equitable governance and participation.

To further reinforce the majority views, another KI remarked.

The MCAs are elected on clan basis from the wards. But when they are at the county assemblies, I think it is more of their interest than clan interest that drives legislation and policy agenda. Whether it is a car loan for them, whether it is increasing their mileage allowances or whether it is getting medical insurance. It is more of their interests as individuals. The MCAs therefore become a special clan among themselves (KI 11: December 2022).

The words, 'the MCAs therefore become a special clan among themselves,' attributed to KI 11, seem to indicate a convergence of interests as soon as electioneering period is over. The remarks suggest that MCAs have abandoned their constitutional duty of being the representatives of the people. The remark 'whether it is increasing their mileage allowances' is indicative of likely corruption as MCAs raid the county coffers to increase their financial muscle in readiness for subsequent elections. This raises the possibility that solving the problem of campaign financing could be essential to ensuring just and representative local governments. Generally, a mix of clan interests being abandoned, elites pursuing their own selfish interests, and a lack of responsive policies and regulations may lead to reduced benefits of devolution and security challenges such as corruption, unemployment, poverty, and conflict over resources such as land. Moreover, it may arouse intra and inter clan resentment and hostilities which may turn volent hence, insecurity.

Discussions of the findings

The results of this study on the intricate relationship of clan elites with voting patterns, distribution of benefits of devolution, and legal and policy frameworks and their impact on national security, are discussed thematically in the subsequent sub sections.

Voting Patterns and National Security

The study established a possibility of an emergent elite hegemony in shaping voting patterns in the north eastern region. Wang (2003) argues that hegemony can be created and sustained when the masses values and belief systems are influenced to have certain orientation that suits the elites. The scholar contends that to sell hegemonic ideas, elites manipulate education systems, in the case of this study- possible maintenance high level of illiteracy and poor voter education amongst the populace, thus making the masses be susceptible misinformation and amenable to elite ideas. Accordingly, several research studies (such as Shubina & Kulakli, 2019) have made the connection between education and high order thinking. Therefore, high educational attainment makes it possible for people to critically evaluate the attitudes and ideas that their clan and clan elites holds, leading to the development of a prosocial viewpoint and thereby promoting peaceful cohabitation with other communities.

Therefore, it does not escape this study that perhaps the high levels of illiteracy in the north eastern region are deliberately maintained as such by elites so as to reduce personal agency and civic consciousness of the population. Indeed, there is a nexus between illiteracy and political exclusion (Hedstrom & Smith, 2013) which then helps the elites maintain their influence over the poorly educated. As such, elites continue to exploit the ignorance of their kin and consolidate power. While doing so, they deftly play on the appeal of clan identity to convince their illiterate clansmen that once in power, they will raise their level of living. That said, education is critical in addressing poverty which is structural cause of violence and insecurity. In line with this view, Ajayi and Ross (2017) showed a connection between increased income, employment opportunities, and higher educational attainment. Thus, it may be concluded that elites' hegemonic tendencies may have contributed to the area's vulnerability to insecurity by failing to raise educational standards and leaving it open to violence due to enduring structural issues. Interestingly, though, hegemonic approach obscures elites' negative influence on social development making it difficult to identify even when its effects are pervasive (United States institute of Peace, 2023). In a nutshell, elites leverage on clan identity politics and incite the community against each other causing divisions, hence insecurity.

Poor voter education also has a significant influence on elite hegemony and national security. Suttman-Lea and Merivaki (2023), in an evaluation of influence of voters' education in the United States of America, established its importance in increasing meaningful participation in electoral process, strengthening voters' confidence, and increasing perception of a free and fair electoral process. Accordingly, poor voter education has created opportunities for the elites to design a pattern of voting that meets their desire to the disadvantage of the larger society. This exposes the north eastern region to poor leadership that is not reflective of their needs thus thwarting the efforts of devolution. Poor leadership affects equitable distribution of resources across various groups in the population thus increasing income inequalities, undermining the effectiveness of social welfare programs and ultimately resulting in lower levels of human

Citation: Elmi, A. R; Sirera, A. M & Handa, O. S. (2024). Devolved Governance and Implications on National Security: Exploring the Role of Clan Elites in the North Eastern Region, Kenya. *Journal of African Interdisciplinary Studies*, 8(1), 5 – 20.

development (Transparency International, 2014). Therefore, if elites influence is not checked, the resources that are meant to bring about equity may as well be used to divide the region along clannism that could not only affect the security in the region but also the entire nation.

The study also infers that elites maintain power hegemony through use of money. In line with this view, Wang (2003) contends that significant economic events, like the presence of sizable amounts of previously unheard-of devolved funds in the region and the masses' access to free money provided by the elites, have the potential to alter traditional social mores and cultural norms while maintaining and sustaining hegemony thus potentially having an impact on security. Through use of money, elites may perpetuate existing inequalities through political exclusion of some segments of the populace and may cause inefficient accomplishment of devolution goals such as development due to their possible incompetence. Cumulatively, through these implications, elites may breed distrust of governance institutions, political exclusion, unrest, and agitation for fair playing ground hence, insecurity. This point of view is confirmed by Department for International Development (n.d.), which asserted that political manoeuvring by elites that leads to exclusion, like in the case of this study, the use of money, has a relation to violence and inadequate development realization.

Distribution of Benefits of Devolution and National Security

The study established that clan elites had unfair access to benefits of devolution through means such as corruption and exploitation of the kinsmen' pride in dominating other clans through socio-economic and political means. This is hardly surprising since elites tend to have undue and unfair access to resources and power when approaches to governance and development that give more power to those at the grassroots are employed (Dasgupta & Beard, 2007). Asymmetrical and unfair allocation of benefits of devolution can cause certain groups to feel marginalized and resentful. This could then lead to hatred and complaints, which may produce insecurity due to exclusion and bias.

Corruption and other related behaviours such as improper allocation, and misappropriation of resources, have a huge implication to service delivery. For instance, due to corruption, the destitute may not be able to access health and education services (World Bank, 2000). It is the resultant breakdown in service delivery due to corruption that may stimulate animosity and resentment by the marginalised and excluded creating possible insecurity situations. Nonetheless, the accumulation of resources in the hands of few gives the elites power to manipulate the community members for their own selfish interests. In line with this view, United States institute of Peace (2023) observe that the elites use their positions to manipulate government rules, systems, and operations to benefit themselves rather than society as a whole. As such, where elite capture prevails, government ministries are oriented to serve a select few. This could fracture the relationship that the elites have with the community due to its impact of reinforcing socio-economic inequalities. Metcalfe (2022) argues that such breakdown of relationship could compromise the achievement of governance goals, raise questions on the legitimacy of local governments, occasion social disharmony and potential violence hence insecurity.

Bullock and Jenkins (2020) point out that when a certain group of people is marginalized, corruption can exacerbate societal divisions by making it more difficult for marginalized people and minorities to obtain resources. It also makes it challenging for underprivileged people to

Citation: Elmi, A. R; Sirera, A. M & Handa, O. S. (2024). Devolved Governance and Implications on National Security: Exploring the Role of Clan Elites in the North Eastern Region, Kenya. *Journal of African Interdisciplinary Studies*, 8(1), 5 – 20.

engage in governance actively and completely. Additionally, it weakens intercommunal trust and reinforces the significance of social identities. Therefore, through corruption, elites may have impacted on the trickle down of benefits of devolution to the grassroots, and may have amplified marginalisation at the local level by excluding others from enjoying the benefits of devolution to a detrimental effect to security. Indeed, corruption has the potential of reinforcing existing poverty levels by limiting opportunities to the general population with low incomes. Moreover, it limits the opportunities to upset the power balance by consigning the under resourced population and communities to the periphery thus confining benefits of devolution to a select few.

Considering the proposition of Che (2016) in the integrative model of primordialist and instrumentalist theories of ethnic conflict, skewed sharing of benefits of devolution are informed by a mix of attractiveness of clan identity and political manipulations. In this case, elites within clans in the north eastern region have politicized their communities based on shared bloodlines to achieve unrestricted access to power and wealth while avoiding accountability. Thus, a small group of people reap the benefits of devolution to the disadvantage of the majority drawn from the dominant clan (s) and the minority. Moreover, they exploit inter clan divisions to their advantages causing posing tensions and insecurity. Therefore, insecurity arises due to intra and inter clan agitation for equality in access to devolved governance benefits such as tenders.

Reflecting on institutional theory, which is anchored on the ideas of Meyer and Rowan (1977) and DiMaggo and Powell (1983), the unfair awards of the benefits of devolution to clan elites is reflective of the acceptable norms and values of the informal institution of the clan. Moreover, it could be reflective of the failure of formal institutions, in this case local governments, to put in place mechanisms that would moderate entrenched networks, values, norms and traditional customs that seem to favour elites from dominant clans. It is also indicative of the failure of county governments to rein in on corruption and unfair practices. Due to these failures, inter and intra clan harmony may have been disrupted leading to insecurity. This is so, because, by tolerating such unfair practises, both formal and informal institutions reinforce inequalities and thus potentially breeding resentment and hostility by those who are not benefiting hence, insecurity.

Legal and Policy Frameworks and National Security

Hussein et al. (2019) explain that legal frameworks have a significant impact on how governance unfolds. The scholars further highlight for successful governance, these frameworks need to be contextualised to speak to local dynamics, challenges, and opportunities. Therefore, successful (good) governance because of responsive legislation can minimise the possibility for conflict hence, security. Consequently, in a clannism context, the lack of undue influence of elites could mean the promulgation of responsive laws and policies that may anchor amongst others equity, inclusivity, participation, and successful/effective devolved governance. In support of this view, Rodriguez-Pose and Tselios (2018) argue that it's from devolution that responsive policies and legislations are made. This is critical in engendering trust in governance and in promoting social harmony hence, security.

Therefore, it can be argued that lack of sufficient legislations and policies in the north eastern region creates possibilities for corruption, mismanagement and inequalities which contribute to tensions, resentment and ultimately, insecurity. On the other hand, perpetuation of clan elites' interest in county legal and policy frameworks may have disastrous influence on

Citation: Elmi, A. R; Sirera, A. M & Handa, O. S. (2024). Devolved Governance and Implications on National Security: Exploring the Role of Clan Elites in the North Eastern Region, Kenya. *Journal of African Interdisciplinary Studies*, 8(1), 5 – 20.

security. This is because, it might result in skewed resource allocation and placement power in the hands of a few through undermining participatory governance and lack of accountability. All these may engender conflict by deepening inter clan divide, creation of disillusionment and frustration with governance and general disputes over resources hence, insecurity. Moreover, the pursuit of elites' selfish interest in legislation/policy enactment practises has an implication of reducing trust in governance institutions and fuelling mass discontent as the welfare of the electorate is given no or little consideration. From the resulting disillusion, violent protest might occur resulting to insecurity.

Reflecting on the theory of decentralisation, which was initially advanced by Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859), undue elites influence portrays devolved governments as inept in realising context-specific legislations and policies that would have addressed, among other things, unequal development, clan diversity, and responsible leadership. It suggests the desire to maintain the status quo in which those in positions of power continue to exploit the weak in the society. With weak legal framework, elites are likely to undermine reform, all to secure their own interests (United States Institute of Peace (2023)). This might cause social disintegration, which would then cause tensions and conflict, and ultimately, insecurity. Moreover, the actions of elites have an impact of disrupting intra and inter clan social harmony through perpetuating inequalities and fuelling animosity hence, local, and national insecurity. Indeed, elite capture as demonstrated by this study, has led to the majority's exclusion from governance and a disregard of their needs in favour of a few people's economic and political interests thus creating possible conditions for insecurity.

Conclusion

The article has established the significant role of elites in the context of clan-based nepotism in shaping the distribution of devolved governance benefits in the north eastern region with adverse consequences for local and national security. Indeed, indications appeared to suggest potential elite capture of local governments in the north eastern region. To strengthen their authority, elites implemented clan-based nepotism to pursue their self-centred objectives. Moreover, rather than focus on community development, they focus on their own self-interest but use hegemonic approach to whip clannism to their support. To this end, resources of devolved governments have created another clan which was described as 'money' to the detriment of security in the region. Therefore, although devolved resources are expected to enhance security, elite capture undermines development that could bring security and stability to the North Eastern Counties.

Recommendations

The study recommended that the County Governments in the North Eastern region should adopt laws and regulations that will permit equity and inclusion in leadership roles that are representative of clan diversity. The study also recommended that national institutions such as IEBC and National Cohesion and Integration Commission [NCIC] should fully implement their mandate to ensure diversity representation in governance. To maintain peaceful interclan coexistence and hence national security it was recommended that the county governments in the North Eastern region should implement more public goods initiatives and encourage more public participation forums.

Citation: Elmi, A. R; Sirera, A. M & Handa, O. S. (2024). Devolved Governance and Implications on National Security: Exploring the Role of Clan Elites in the North Eastern Region, Kenya. *Journal of African Interdisciplinary Studies*, 8(1), 5 – 20.

References

- Abdullahi, A. (2021, January 28). *Somali elite political culture: Conceptions, structures, and historical evolution*. Institute for Peace, Security and Development.
<https://ipsed.org/somali-elite-political-culture-conceptions-structures-and-historical-evolution/>
- Ajayi, K. F., & Ross, P.H. (2017). The Effects of Education on Financial Outcomes: Evidence from Kenya. *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 69 (1), 253-289, 2020
- Altugan, A. S. (2015). The relationship between cultural identity and learning. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Science*, 186, 1159-1162. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.04.161>
- Bullock, J., & Jenkins, M. (2020, June 26). *Corruption and marginalisation*. Transparency International.
<https://knowledgehub.transparency.org/assets/uploads/helpdesk/Corruption-and-marginalisation.pdf>
- Burbidge, D. (2019). *An Experiment in Devolution: National Unity and the Deconstruction of the Kenya State*. Nairobi: Strathmore University Press.
- Che, A.M. (2016, June 1). *Linking instrumentalist and primordialist theories of ethnic conflict*. E-International Relations. <https://www.e-ir.info/2016/06/01/linking-instrumentalist-and-primordialist-theories-of-ethnic-conflict/>
- Collins, K. (2006). *Clan politics and regime transition in Central Asia*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Dasgupta, A., & Beard, V.A. (2007). Community driven development, collective action and elite capture in Indonesia. *Development and Change*, 38, 229-249.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7660.2007.00410.x>
- Department for International Development (n.d.). *The politics of poverty: Elites, citizens, and States*. DFID. <https://www.oecd.org/derec/unitedkingdom/48688822.pdf>
- Gullete, D. (2010). The problems of the "clan" politics model of central Asian statehood: A call for alternative pathways for research. In E. Kavalski (Ed.), *Stable outside, Fragile inside: Post-Soviet Statehood in Central Asia*. (pp 54-69). London: Routledge.
- Hedstrom, J., & Smith, J. (2013). *Overcoming political exclusion*. International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.
- Higley, J. (2008). *Elite theory in political sociology*. Austin: The University of Texas.
- Holcombe, R.G. (2021). Elite influence on general political preferences. *Journal of Government and Economics*, 3(C),100021. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jge.2021.100021>
- Holmes, K.R. (2015). *What is national security?* The Heritage Foundation.
- Hussein, D.S., Jermisittiparsert, K., & Ahmad, P. (2019). The importance of rule of law in governance. *Journal of Raparin University*, 6(1), 73-90.
[http://dx.doi.org/10.26750/vol\(6\).no\(1\).paper6](http://dx.doi.org/10.26750/vol(6).no(1).paper6)
- International Crisis Group. (2015). *Kenya's Somali North East: Devolution and security*.
- Kenya Constitution 2010. Retrieved June 10, 2022, from
<http://kenyalaw.org:8181/exist/kenyalex/actview.xql?actid=Const2010>
- Kenya National Bureau of Statistics. (2019). *2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census: Volume III Distribution of Population by Age and Sex*. Author
- Mbori H. (2021). Devolution as a panacea to deeply divided multi-ethnic (national) states: The continuing Kenyan experiment. *Strathmore Law Journal*, 1, 85-113

Citation: Elmi, A. R; Sirera, A. M & Handa, O. S. (2024). Devolved Governance and Implications on National Security: Exploring the Role of Clan Elites in the North Eastern Region, Kenya. *Journal of African Interdisciplinary Studies*, 8(1), 5 – 20.

- Metcalf, L. (2022). *The struggle for pluralism and peace: Legitimacy. Conflict and governance in two Kenyan wards*. International Republican Institute.
- Musse, H.A. (2020). *Clan-based federalism in Somalia and relationship between the federal government and federal member states [Masters Thesis]*. Ankara Yildirim Beyazit University, Turkey.
- Rodríguez-Pose, A. & Tselios, A. (2018). *Wellbeing, political decentralization and governance quality in Europe*. Informa UK Limited.
- Shubina, I., & Kulakli, A. (2019). Critical thinking, creativity, and gender differences for knowledge generation in Education. *Literacy Information and Computer Education Journal (LICEJ)*, 10(1), 3086 -3093.
- Singh, A.K. (2015). Concept of national security: An overview. *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research*, 2(12), 1920-1925.
- Suttman-Lea, M., & Merivaki, T. (2023). The Impact of Voter Education on Voter Confidence: Evidence from the 2020 U.S. Presidential Election. *Election Law Journal: Rules, Politics, and Policy*, 22(2). Online Publication. <https://doi.org/10.1089/elj.2022.0055>
- Transparency International. (2014). *State capture: An overview*. Transparency International. https://www.transparency.org/files/content/corruptionqas/State_capture_an_overview_2014.pdf
- Tunio, F. H. & Nabi, A. A. (2021). Political decentralization, fiscal centralization, and its consequences in case of Pakistan, *Cogent Social Sciences*, 7(1), Online Publication. DOI: 10.1080/23311886.2021.1924949
- United States Institute of Peace. (2023). *Elite Capture and Corruption of Security Sectors*. Author. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/02/elite-capture-and-corruption-security-sectors>
- Wang, Q.K. (2003). Hegemony and socialization of the mass public: The case of postwar Japan's cooperation with the United States on China Policy. *Review of International Studies*, 29, 99-119. DOI: 10.1017/S0260210503000068
- Wanyande, P. (2016). *Devolution and territorial development inequalities: The Kenyan experience* (Working Paper Series No. 187). RIMISP
- Wesonga, D. (2015). *Framework for Improved Integrated Education in the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands of Kenya*. European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department (ECHO).
- World Bank. (2000). *Attacking poverty: Opportunity, empowerment, and security*. Washington DC: World Bank Group. <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/11856>
- World Bank. (2017). *World Development Report 2017: Governance and the law*. Washington DC: World Bank Group.