

**Abstract:**

A violent conflict engulfed Kenya after a flawed and disputed presidential election result in December 2007. Before then, Kenya was considered an icon, a bastion of political stability and economic prosperity in Africa. It surprised many that this icon would go up in flames so fast. Analyses of what went wrong with Kenya tend to gloss over the land question and ethnicity as factors behind the violence. Yet ethnicity and the manner in which the land question in the former white highlands and especially in the Rift Valley region has been addressed throughout the post-colonial period played an important role in the post-2007 election violence. This contribution argues that the reforms pursued through the settlement schemes and the land purchase programme by successive governments ethicized the land question and established a ground for political conflict. It also shows that by looking at Kenya's politics of access to the former white highlands this violence becomes predictable. The discussion concludes that political leaders have not been keen to address the land question and it therefore remains a hot spot that, unless addressed in a democratic manner, may well ignite recurrence of violence.