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The General Elections in Kenya, 2007

Introduction

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Introduction

Jérôme Lafargue

- 1 This book is a translation of a special issue of IFRA's journal *Les Cahiers d'Afrique de l'Est*, no. 37, and of a collection of articles from *Politique africaine*, no. 109. These both focused on the General Elections in Kenya at the end of 2007. The on-site presence of several researchers (Bernard Calas, Anne Cussac, Dominique Connan, Musambayi Katumanga, Jérôme Lafargue, Patrick Mutahi), fieldwork carried out by others between December 2007 and February 2008 (Florence Brisset-Foucault, Ronan Porhel, Brice Rambaud), as well as a good knowledge of the country by researchers on regular visits (Claire Médard, Hervé Maupeu), were all ingredients that led to the production of hundreds of pages within a limited period. These articles were actually published in April 2008. Some political information has not been updated but this changes nothing in terms of the initial aim of taking into account and analyzing the events that set the country on fire for several weeks.
- 2 However, since April 2008, the situation—to all intents and purposes—stabilized. The coalition government took shape, with Mwai Kibaki remaining President while Raila Odinga became the Prime Minister as an appeasement. Nevertheless, nothing has been decided yet—far from it—and no one is fooled by this ill-matched coupling. The government's prevarications on sensitive issues (employment, land, internally displaced people, rising prices) and the recently discovered serious corruption incidents do not help to maintain a climate of confidence. Within the two main political party formations, there is great tension and it cannot be said for a fact that these structures will prevail to the end of the year. Whereas some ministers engage in fierce battles for powerful positions within their party, others do not hesitate to declare themselves as candidates for the next presidential elections. This remains the main challenge—who will take over the reins from Kibaki? As the on-going presidential mandate has barely begun, is it a mere stopgap to the next elections in 2012? The country, more so than ever, is truly in suspense. This includes the donors, who had made it possible for Kenya to restore a semblance of peace. But to what point will they be interested in investing in the country and to protect their place in it?

- 3 The tone of this book may, undoubtedly, not sound highly optimistic. However, this should not dampen the unanimous sense of hope in the country that the political and social situation will once more be more than just tolerable.

Jérôme Lafargue, 9 September 2008.