

**STATE BUILDING, DEMOCRATIZATION AND THE  
ROLE OF ETHNIC POLITICAL IDENTITY:  
A CASE STUDY OF KENYA**

By

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## **DECLARATION**

I Lilian Akoth Ogo declare that:

- I) This Research Dissertation, except otherwise indicated is my original work.
- II) This Dissertation is an expansion on a project paper that was submitted for my BA Honours degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and was intended to be a stepping stone into this work.
- III) This Dissertation does not contain other person's data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.

Signature .....

Date .....

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## Abstract

It has been argued that a significant proportion of socio-political problems and challenges in the modern African state are rooted in the history of the colonial project of state formation, and the subsequent emergence and crystallization of ethnicity as a serious threat to the establishment of the nation-state (Mamdani 1996, 2001). Ethnicity continues to serve as an important determinant of inclusion and exclusion to state power, and thus access to state resources, often leading to political violence and civil strife that continues to stifle progress and stability. This research has two fundamental broad objectives. The first is to interrogate how ethnicity and cultural identity evolved into a complex social and political identity of significance in the political struggles of citizens within the modern Kenyan nation-state. The second is to problematize the ways through which ethnic competition and differences are expressed in current 'democratic' political processes and how this affects the attainment of democracy in its true sense.

These certainly necessitate an engagement with the following central questions: Why is it that in Kenya economic and political struggles are fought along ethnic lines? What are the consequence of such mobilizations to state building and democratization in the country? Why have sub-national formations been so difficult to do away with and continue to influence the discourse in Kenya, including the recent post-election crisis? I critically interrogate the origins of polarized ethnic identities and analyse the role that such ethicized political identity plays on state building, nationalization of politics and the establishment of discursive democracy in Kenya.

## Table of Contents

<b>DECLARATION</b>	<b>II</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>III</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>LIST OF ACRONYMS</b>	<b>VIII</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY	1
1.2 IDENTIFICATION OF RESEARCH PROBLEM	5
1.3 THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY	9
1.4 STRUCTURE OF THIS DISSERTATION	10
<b>CHAPTER TWO</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS</b>	<b>13</b>
2.1 LOCATING MY RESEARCH IN THE METHODOLOGICAL SPECTRUM	13
2.2 QUALITATIVE APPROACH IN MY RESEARCH	18
2.3 DISCOURSE ANALYSIS	19
2.3.1 LIMITATIONS: ISSUES OF RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY	25
2.4 CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS IN MY RESEARCH	26
2.5 CONCLUSION	29
<b>CHAPTER THREE</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS</b>	<b>31</b>
3.1 INTRODUCTION	31
3.2 BROADER THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS	31
3.3 THEORISING THE ETHNIE, NATION AND STATE	35
3.4 CONCLUSION	44
<b>CHAPTER FOUR</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>THEORIZING ETHNIC POLITICAL IDENTITY, INTERETHNIC POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND LEGITIMACY IN AFRICA</b>	<b>46</b>
4.1 INTRODUCTION	46
4.2 ETHNIC POLITICAL IDENTITY IN AFRICA	47

4.3 COLONISATION AND INTERETHNIC POLITICAL VIOLENCE	55
4.4 THE AFRICAN STATE AND QUESTIONS OF LEGITIMACY	60
4.5 CONCLUSION	65
<b>CHAPTER FIVE</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>LOOKING BACKWARD AND LOOKING FORWARD: PROBLEMATICS OF ETHNIC POLITICAL IDENTITY IN KENYA</b>	<b>67</b>
5.1 INTRODUCTION	67
5.2 THE ROOTS OF POLARIZED ETHNIC IDENTITIES AND ETHNICITIES IN KENYA	69
5.3 THE COLONIAL CREATION OF KENYA'S POLITICAL ECONOMY	72
5.4 CONCLUSION	83
<b>CHAPTER SIX</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>PROBLEMATICS AND DISCOURSES OF ETHNICITY IN THE CONTEMPORARY KENYAN SOCIETY</b>	<b>85</b>
6.1 INTRODUCTION	85
6.2 THE ETHNICISED DISCOURSES IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE	86
6.3 ETHNICITY - A SALIENT FEATURE OF POLITICAL IDENTITY AND DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES IN KENYA	93
6.4 ETHNICITY, CITIZENSHIP AND THE NATION-STATE	102
6.5 CONCLUSION	109
<b>CHAPTER SEVEN</b>	<b>111</b>
<b>ETHNICITY AND DEMOCRATIZATION IN KENYA</b>	<b>111</b>
7.1 INTRODUCTION	111
7.2 DEMOCRATIZATION IN KENYA	113
7.3 THE DEEP-SEATED CHALLENGES TO DEMOCRATIC POLITICS IN KENYA	117
7.4 CONCLUSION	124
<b>CHAPTER EIGHT</b>	<b>126</b>
<b>8. ANALYTICAL SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION</b>	<b>126</b>
8.1 AUTHORITY OF THE GOVERNMENT OVER THE MASSES	127
8.2 PATERNALISM AND MENTORSHIP	129
8.3 ETHNIC MOBILISATION AND ELECTORAL DEMOCRACY	131
8.4 CONCLUSION	134
8.5 WAY FORWARD	140
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>141</b>
<b>APPENDIX 1: PODCASTS AND YOU-TUBE VIDEOS ON ETHNIC POLITICS AND VIOLENCE IN KENYA</b>	<b>160</b>

<b><u>APPENDIX 2: SATIRE ON TRIBALISM POLITICS AND CORRUPTION</u></b>	<b><u>161</u></b>
<b><u>APPENDIX 3: DEMONSTRATES THAT VOTERS PREFER TO VOTE FOR CANDIDATE OF THEIR OWN ETHNICITY</u></b>	<b><u>162</u></b>
<b><u>APPENDIX 4: QUESTIONS OVER INTEGRITY THE OF THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND ISSUES OF CONTENTION</u></b>	<b><u>165</u></b>
<b><u>APPENDIX 5: THE PROBLEM OF ETHIC DIVIDE IN KENYA</u></b>	<b><u>176</u></b>

## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

**FORD-** Forum for the Restoration of Democracy

**KANU-**Kenya African National Union

**KADU-** Kenya African Democratic Union

**KPU-**Kenya Peoples Union

**NARC-** National Rainbow Coalition

**NGO-**Non Governmental Organization

**MP-**Member of Parliament

**PNU-**Party of National Unity

**ODM-**Orange Democratic movement

**NPK-**National Party of Kenya

**NDP-**National Development Party

**LDP-**Liberal Democratic Party



## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.1 Introduction and Background to the Study

Africa has been described as a field of intersecting transnational identities that are permeating uneven and unstable national identities and citizenship. In addition to being a source of tension and instability, this has serious implications for state building and the democratization project (the ongoing African aspiration to achieve discursive democracy) in the continent. On the one hand, we have African ethnic political identities conferred on Africans by Western colonial projects<sup>1</sup>; on the other, we have the national identities forged within the bounds of the state, which also is a colonial legacy. The modern African nation-state<sup>2</sup> is thus in various ways a conglomeration of identities and cultural groups featuring as socio-political units as an interplay of their colonial and postcolonial constructions. Fluidity of ethnic identities is apparent in the modern African nation-state, from Egypt to South Africa, Somalia to Ivory Coast; they are constantly (re)constituted to influence behaviour of individuals within in the nation-state in various fields of practice. Ethnic and other sub-national identities either have been reconfigured by or configured the changes that are unfolding in political structures and systems of the post-colonial states in Africa. They continue to serve as a tool to political mobilizations, in democratic experiments that begun in the 1990s as well as civil-wars and conflicts of various types. Ethnic mobilizations are so pervasive in the continent, they have been the main features in the more than 30 wars fought in Africa since 1970, and most of these have been internal rather than inter-state wars (Regan 2002).

Enduring characteristics of ethnic political identities is evident in their resurgence with the push towards Western liberal democracy that is presented as a panacea to the continent's problems. Despite the democratization experiment in Africa, ethnic polarity and armed conflict continue to characterize the political currents in the continent. The recent post-election violence that rocked Kenya, Ivory Coast, Ethiopia and others only confirm that indeed political mobilization of

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<sup>1</sup> At times, there is a tendency to identify ethnic identities in Africa as "primordial". In rejection of this primordial view that there is naturalized identity, in the point above, my intention is to appraise that argument that colonial practices have managed to accentuate, and, at times, "invent", ethnic identities (Mamdani 2002).

<sup>2</sup> This must be read both as aspiration and on-going project.

ethnicity is an ongoing problem and a challenge to national politics in Africa, and is thus a major issue of concern. Clearly this is an indication that ethnic identities, beyond their political origin of the colonial project, they have also found a space and resonance as a post-colonial construction, as an actualization of Fanon's (1963) prediction. For example, many post-colonial African politicians have mastered and perfected the art of ethnic mobilization and polarization for their own political goals. In this sense, we should not only be critical of the origins of polarized ethnic identities but also the role that such ethnicized political identity has assumed to play on state building, nationalization of politics and the establishment of discursive democracy in Kenya. It is important to ask then: What does it mean for Kenya to celebrate ethnic identities (via multicultural mode) while they are implicated in political instability and violent conflicts? How do we re-conceptualize and appropriate ethnicity into state formation and what role should it assume within the democratization project?

These questions are located in a specific moment that made me think about the troubles of Kenyan electoral democracy – the post-election crisis of 2008. This and similar events always alert us to the troubled states in the continent, many of which are constituted of ethnic groupings that are in actual fact loosely welded to the state. The 2008 ethnicised post-election violence erupted in Kenya threatening to destabilize the East African country long considered to be the beacon of political stability and the nucleus of peace and conflict resolution amidst the more politically volatile countries in the Horn of Africa. Efforts to explain the fault lines, why and how this tragedy unfolded touched on different segments of the pole – the colonial legacy of divide-and-rule policy, the same policy perfected by post-colonial political elites; graft, ethnic closure, failure of the economy and patrimonial state programmes. At the risk of generalization, there appeared to be two projections of the 2008 post-election crisis in Kenya: one suggests the significance of ethnic political identity and its mobilization, while others downplay it and point fingers elsewhere. Either way ethnic identity featured prominently in, contributed to, or complicated the 2008 violence. More importantly, the implications of such ethnic mobilization in an electoral democracy, with competing parties and political formations became apparent.

The body of literature on the continent points to the troubling signs of elites' ethnic mobilizations and management towards clientist politics, which is devoid of any progressive political project. For example, Rawlinson (2003, p.1-7) claims that 'tribalism (sic) is in fact more

a political contest led and managed by elites for influence in the state and control of its resources, and that in Africa the main criterion according to which socio-political groups define and identify themselves is rooted in ethnicity rather than in class....the politicization of ethnicity is parasitic on class mobilization'. Inventing and co-opting of ethnicity and ethnic belonging, as emotional stroke is what is noted here, which 'runs against what is in their material interest' and undermines 'the rule of law and the delivery of efficient government services' (Rawlinson 2003,p.1-7).

Although ethnic tensions between Kenyan communities have increasingly intensified in recent decades, they can be traced back to the aftermath of Kenya's independence and acquirement of statehood in 1963. Even under the leadership of Kenya's first president Kenyatta, ethnic 'manoeuvring and mobilization' was an apparatus for power politics in Kenya (Kwaja 2009). As Kwaja (2009,p.39) puts it, '[w]hat is rather new is the nature and character of its resurgence as a result of the militant posture of ethnic groups consequently leading to armed conflicts of monumental proportions and consequences'. Ethnic polarization, mistrust and suspicion among the different ethnic communities have thus become a characteristic of the contemporary Kenyan state. It is necessary to ask here: under these conditions, what does it mean to experiment with electoral democracy? How should the politics of ethnicity and ethnic politics be constituted within public sphere, and, thereby, deliberative public democracy? These questions are directly relevant to the political legitimacy of the nation state.

There is a substantial body of research on themes of ethnicity, conflict, nationalization of politics and democratization in Africa. In this research, I try to position my work within two most important pieces of work. First, I seek to employ Mahmoud Mamdani's thesis of a 'bifurcated state', which allows a better understanding of state formation and citizenship in the continent as located in a particular history and sets of practices. Looking into history and context is relevant if we are to unravel the foundations of the political and socioeconomic currents that we see in the continent today and thus the usefulness of Mamdani's formulation in this study. However, this formulation is only constructive in so far as it helps us to understand the challenges the political

systems and structures of the colonial past may pose to the contemporary African political economy.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, following Achilles Mbembe (2002), as a second starting point, I also view that slavery, colonialism and apartheid should not be used to depict Africans as helpless and lacking in self-expression, which he calls ‘a cult of victimization’. Mbembe (2002) criticism of the tenets of researchers who take on the victimization approach and injection of what he called ‘baroque practices’ (a concept that useful to thinking about forms of resistance and struggle, as well as different and interesting modes of injecting and appropriating ethnicity) are useful pointers for this project. Moreover, I take Mbembe’s caution against the construction of the African past and present through the prism of *victimhood* very seriously. Mbembe writes:

this construction of history leads to a naive and uncritical attitude....leading to an emphasis on violence as the privileged avenue for self-determination; the fetishisation of state power; the disqualification of the model of liberal democracy; and the populist and authoritarian dream of a mass society (2002,p.244).<sup>4</sup>

With the above in mind, it was thus necessary to carry out this research by placing great importance on the relevance of African history and context in understanding themes of ethnicity, democratization and conflict. It is beyond the scope of this research to venture into seeking to provide political theories or models for curbing ethnic polarization or providing solutions to the problems that ethnicity poses to nationalization and democratization; while this is worthwhile, it may be an endeavour of future research. The significance of the framework of this research is to bring to the forefront the understanding of the link between the modern political economy to that of colonial state, not for justifying modern development predicaments in the continent *per se*. It is useful in enabling us to critically stimulate debates and thinking on the possibility of a revision and possibly a transformation the political and economic structures that are rooted in the colonial system.

I demonstrated how the divisive politics in Kenya have their roots in the administrative practices of the colonial state; that is, the political and economic structures and practices of the colonial state. I also found that ethnicised conflicts in Kenya are about unresolved historical injustices particularly the disproportionate redistribution of resources, after independence, this is mainly a

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<sup>3</sup> I expand these discussions and points in the next chapter.

<sup>4</sup> Again, see extended discussion on this on chapter two.

concern about loss of land. In dealing with the problems of Ethnicity and Citizenship in Kenya, the I found that there is a problem of reconciling bureaucratic state channels of access to state resources such as employment and the non-bureaucratic state channels that characterizes ethnic communal life that is embedded in African culture of sharing and communal welfare.

In analysing the 1990s democratization struggles in Kenya, it emerged that the legalization of opposition parties in December 1991 by Moi regime was largely a reaction to donors' suspension of financial assistance. As such, democratisation at that time did not lead to a transformation of the political system but forced the government to resort to privatized state violence to silence opposition parties. I found that in contemporary Kenya, the continuation of political turmoil is due to self-interested leadership that limits political participation by minimising access to objective information and civic education.

## **1.2 Identification of Research Problem**

On 27<sup>th</sup> December 2007, Kenyans went to the polls; it was the 10<sup>th</sup> general elections since the state's independence from Britain in 1963, and it was also the 4<sup>th</sup> multiparty elections since multipartyism began in 1992. What is evident is that since democratic politics was introduced in Kenya, elections have been marred with ethnic violence. Former president, Daniel Toroitich Arap Moi was forced into grudgingly adopting "electoral democracy" and multiparty system, and subsequently the introduction of the first multiparty elections in 1992. Even then he continued to "win" all elections until the Kenyan opposition parties strategically formed a coalition to force him out of power in 2002. Aluoka Otieno, a political analyst has stipulated that Moi was against multipartyism and electoral democracy claiming that 'multipartyism was bound to bring about tribal tensions and deepen regional divisions in the country' (in The Tokyo Foundation March 31 2008). Irrespective of whether Moi was genuinely concerned about ethnic tensions or whether he was using it as a narrative to prolong his grip on power, it simply pointed to the uneasy state of democracy in Kenya, and it's buried but not extinguished ethnic tensions and polarisations.

The 2007 election however was more ethnically electrified than any election has been in Kenyan history; the violence left thousands dead and others injured. Kenyans descended on each other with *Pangas* (machetes) and gasoline following the announcement of President Mwai Kibaki of

Party of National Unity (PNU) as the winner of the hotly contested presidential elections in which the opposition leader, Raila Odinga of the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) and his supporters refused to accept the election results, claiming Kibaki had rigged the vote. This contestation found a simple ethnic colouring: ODM and Mr Odinga became the beacon of the Luo ethnic group, while KPU and Mr Kibaki became Kikuyu ethnic group's bastion. These represented the ethnic character of the contestation and tension that pitted the two major ethnic groupings against each other. The violence that ensued was so dramatic and devastating. According to Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) (9 January 2008), a UN news agency, more than 1,200 people were killed and some 350,000 displaced into temporary camps, with an equal number seeking refuge with friends or relatives. Otieno, a political commentator stated that:

For the better part of the first two months of the year, Kenya's political situation remained fluid, tense and unpredictable. The country was not holding, and a bloodbath loomed after weeks of ethnic violence precipitated by a suspected electoral fraud that returned President Mwai Kibaki of the Party of National Unity (PNU) to power (The Tokyo Foundation, March 31 2008).

It was clear that the 2008 post-election violence in Kenya profoundly shook the world. With the Rwandan genocide a recent memory, there were fears that the country could plunge into ethnic violence of that proportion. This has forced us to investigate the background to this problem and the context within which ethnic politics sustains itself. For some, this is a problem reproduced by the successive post-colonial regimes that have extended the divide and rule strategy. Otieno argues, 'the divide-and-rule administration tactics, although a legacy of the British colonial administration in Kenya, were polished under the Kenya African National Union (KANU) regime' (Otieno, The Tokyo Foundation March 31 2008). Otieno further observed that '[s]tate appointments, budgetary allocations, and a distribution of public goodies appear to strictly follow the beacons of ethnic loyalty and closeness to state power' (The Tokyo Foundation March 31 2008). For others, ethnicity had little to do with the violence and rather is it an expression of discontent with the state and the state of the economic. An article by the Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), a UN news agency, published January 9 2008 with following headline '*Kenya-It's the economy, stupid (not just "tribalism")*', captured this second view. This piece cites economics as the real basis for the violence that rocked Kenya after the announcement of president Kibaki as the winner, pointing to the fact that the wave of political

violence had nothing to do with ethnicity. What we have is two projections of the recent post-election crisis in Kenya: one suggests the significance of ethnic political identity and its mobilization, while the other downplays it.

Either way we have come to learn that ethnic identity has featured prominently in, contributed to, or complicated the 2008 violence. More importantly, we have noticed the implication of such ethnic mobilization in an electoral democracy, with competing parties and political formations. This becomes even more troubling if we agree with Rawlinson's claim that:

tribalism is in fact more a political contest led and managed by elites for influence in the state and control of its resources, and that in Africa the main criterion according to which socio-political groups define and identify themselves is rooted in ethnicity rather than in class...the politicization of ethnicity is parasitic on class mobilization (2003, p.1).

Leroy (1989,p.5) points out that ordinary Africans are prey to 'false consciousness' due to elite's instrumental mobilization of the population along ethnic lines. Rawlinson also wonders if it is ever possible that an individual's consciousness of ethnic belonging is subjectively false. He notes that, objectively, it works against what is in their material interest; 'which is to undermine prebendal and clientist politics and demand transparency, the rule of law and the delivery of efficient government services' (Rawlinson 2001, p.1).

Ethnic tensions between Kenyan communities although have increasingly intensified in recent decades, can be traced back to the aftermath of Kenya's independence and acquirement of statehood in 1963. As I indicated earlier, ethnic mobilization was an important political tool for political elites under the leadership of Kenya's first president Kenyatta to maintain control over the diverse population (see Essack 1978; Klopp 2001; Orvis 2001; Barkan 2004; Anderson 2005; Kwaja 2009). With the introduction of electoral democracy, these ethnic forms have found a new political content. Political party affiliation and preference as well as voter behaviour seem to be tied to ethnicity. Kwaja writes, 'politics in Kenya in the run up to the 2007 elections was no doubt influenced by ethnic concerns; voters, parties and policies were distinctly placed along ethnic cleavages' (Kwaja 2009,p. 40). The current president Mwai Kibaki is Kikuyu, and his main opponent who is the 'front-runner' Raila Odinga is Luo. The major ethnic rift between the Kikuyus and Luos began during Kenyatta's leadership. According to Kwaja (2009), Kenya became a de facto one-party state as the pre-independence opposition party KADU voluntarily

merged into the ruling KANU in 1964. In 1966, the radical Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, the father of Raila Odinga, formed an opposition party Kenya People's Union (KPU) to fight for the landless; those who had lost their land to Europeans through forceful evictions<sup>5</sup> and for the nationalization of key economic production sectors<sup>6</sup> 'through a national democratic revolution', (Essack 1978,p.1731). This move was not welcomed by Kenyatta, who was not willing to put up with any political challenge. Using authoritarian tactics, Kenyatta side-lined, suppressed and eventually detained Jaramogi Odinga and his group of dissidents. Essack analyses KPU's misfortunes and demise as follows:

Parliamentary democracy works only in countries where political parties represent the same class interests. But with KPU it was different. It sought by parliamentary means to change class domination to secure the domination of workers and peasants over the international bourgeoisie. The monopolies then brought the entire state machinery of coercion and suppression into play to destroy KPU. It began with the arrest of KPU's youth organisers. Later KPU was prevented from forming branches in Kikuyu areas. Its meetings were forbidden. When elections were held, suddenly all KPU candidates were found to have made "mistakes" in the filling in of forms and were therefore disqualified from standing (Essack 1978, p.1731).

Although these differences were in reality, ideological differences; that is, Oginga Odinga's socialist approach to the development trajectory of the postcolonial state and Kenyatta's capitalist stance. These contradictions expressed themselves tribalist as between Kikuyus and Luo, Kikuyu and non-Kikuyu or Nyeri Kikuyu and Kiambii Kikuyu. Tribalism was being utilized to acquire wealth and positions of power. Today, ethnic tensions and conflicts in Kenya are not only restricted to the Luos and Kikuyus, they have penetrated different regions of the nation. There have been ongoing and sporadic conflicts between Kalenjins and Kikuyus, Luyhas, Kisiis, Pokots and Keiyos and other ethnic groups. More recently, we have seen the Muslim (Kenyan Arabs) and non-Muslim divide as well, as the coastal ethnic groups that are predominantly Muslim mobilising this as dividing point to raise their concern of marginalization from politics and economy. The political battle and tension between Luos and Kikuyus, however, remains the fiercest and protracted political conflict and tension.<sup>7</sup> What is evident is that the post-colonial Kenyan society is fragmented along ethnic lines. Jinadu (2007) states, 'the consequences

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<sup>5</sup> 'Odinga and his group believed that there could be no real progress in Kenya, unless the agrarian problem was solved in the interests of the landless and small peasantry' (Essack 1978, p.1731).

<sup>6</sup> 'Odinga believed that control of the economy vested in banks, industries, and plantations; and called for the nationalisation of the former two' (Essack 1978, p.1731).

<sup>7</sup> It is to be noted that Kenya has over 70 distinct ethnic groups. For the purpose of this study, my focus is going to be on these particular ones that have dominated the Kenyan state and its political economy.



of the ethnicisation of power and politics in Kenya is the constriction of the political space, hardened ethnic suspicion, deepened mutual ethnic antagonisms and the reduction of politics to a zero-sum game' (quoted in Kwaja 2009, p. 399).

### **1.3 The objectives of the study**

It has been argued that in modern African states, problems are rooted in the history of the colonial project of state formation, and the subsequent emergence and crystallization of ethnicity as a serious threat to the establishment of the nation-state (see Lonsdale and Berman 1979; Berman 1998; Mamdani 1984, 1996a, 1996b, 2001). Ethnicity continues to serve as an important determinant of inclusion and exclusion to state power, and thus access to state resources, often leading to political violence and civil strife that continues to stifle progress and stability. Following the above background to the problem, two fundamental broad objectives are set for this research. The first is how ethnicity and cultural identity evolved into a complex social and political identity of significance in the political struggles of Kenyan citizens within the modern Kenyan nation-state project. The second is to problematize the ways through which ethnic competition and differences are expressed in current 'democratic' political processes and how this affects the attainment of democracy in its true sense. This study has insightfully interrogated issues of ethnicity and state-nationalism as well as ethnicity and democratization in Kenya. In line with these, it was certainly important to ask the following questions: Why is it that in Kenya economic and political struggles are fought along ethnic lines? What are the consequence of such mobilizations to state building and democratization in the country? Why have sub-national formations been so difficult to do away with and continue to influence the discourse in Kenya, including the recent post-election crisis? I acknowledge that there are cases where violence erupted purely because of economic reasons and political struggles were not ethnic in nature but rather against state failure.

Therefore, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the roots of polarized ethnic identities and ethnicity in Kenya?
2. What are different modes of ethnic political-expressions in the contemporary Kenyan society? What are the extents of ethnic tensions and their associated deep-seated issues in Kenya?

3. How (and why) is ethnicity still a salient feature of political identity and democratic processes five decades after the independence of Kenya?
4. What are the ways in which ethnicity, as a symbol of political identity, interplays with the state building project, nationalization of politics and democracy in Kenya?
5. What would be the long and short-term implications of the persistent presence of ethnicity as a sub-national social formation on electoral democracy in Kenya? What does this mean for the democratization project in Kenya?

## **1.4 Structure of This Dissertation**

*Chapter One* gives the content and context of political and socioeconomic environment in Kenya. Here, I identify the problem of politicized ethnicity as the African archetype for economic and political competition and hence a source of conflict in democratic processes. Here I also trace the relationship between ethnicity, conflict, nationalization of politics and democratization in Africa in the body of available literature. I outline the objectives of this study and some of the key findings of this work.

*Chapter Two* deals with the questions of research methodology. I identify the theoretical framework used in this study as well as give a description of research methodology used in this research. I locate my research within a qualitative approach using a critical discourse analysis.

*Chapter Three* deals with theoretical and conceptual frameworks. I started with the Mamdani and Mbembe, which I tried to find a ground for these two formulations to complement each other. While undertaking this research, I also felt the need to expand my conceptual and theoretical thinking by adopting Habermas' thesis on public sphere and communicative action, which I explore in the eighth chapter in analysing the culture and context of politics in Kenya. Following this, I discuss the conceptual frameworks that I found useful to thinking about ethnic politics, nation, the state and (aspiring) nation-state in the continent. I look at the various theoretical perspectives on ethnic identity and try to situate politicized ethnicity and conflict in Africa through primordialist and instrumentalist views.

*Chapter Four* I try to locate the research problem within broader theoretical works on ethnic identity and citizenship in postcolonial African states. I look at the various theoretical

perspectives on ethnic identity and try to situate politicized ethnicity and conflict in Africa through primordialist and instrumentalist views that so seem to inform the understanding of ethnicity in Africa. Here I also look at the various notions of ethnicity, ethnic competition and violence as a creation of the colonial state project particularly through the eyes of Fanon, Mamdani and Mbembe. I also try to understand the relationship between ethnicity and state legitimacy in most of the continents' nation-states, as well as analyse why politicized ethnicity poses significant challenge to the formation of the state through Predatory theory advanced by Tilly.

*Chapter Five* looks at the origins of polarized ethnic identity and ethnicity in Kenya by interrogating the development and the structures of the political economy of the colonial state in Kenya. Using Mamdani, I argue that the creation of the 'bifurcated state' institutionalised ethnicity. I also highlight how ethnicity continues to be an important determinant in the distribution of state resources and employment opportunities in Kenya's political economy.

*Chapter Six* focuses on problems and discourses of ethnicity in contemporary Kenyan society. It outlines the role of ethnicised discourses in public space and the effect that it has in perpetuating disunity. It also explores the significance of ethnicity in the socioeconomic and political spheres of the modern Kenyan society, and also interrogates some of the deep-seated issues that are used to fuel ethnic tensions in Kenya. This chapter also seeks to find out how (and why) ethnicity is still a salient feature of political identity and democratic processes five decades after the independence of Kenya. I also interrogate the importance of ethnic identity in the formulation of "ethnic citizenship" and what this means when it translates to an endeavour to reconstitute state citizenship in Kenya. I interrogate the ways in which ethnicity, as a symbol of political identity, clash with the state building project and nationalization of politics in Kenya. I try to understand the intricacies arising as a result of the development of two contradictory political systems (the state and ethnic group) present to the forging of nationalistic politics.

In *Chapter Seven* analyses the implications of ethnicity to democratization in Kenya by looking at the challenges and opportunities that ethnicity pose to the attainment of 'true democracy' in Kenya. In this chapter, I ask: what would be the long and short-term implications of the persistent presence of ethnicity as sub-national social formation on electoral democracy in

Kenya? What does this mean for the democratization project in Kenya? In *Chapter 8*, I give an analytical summary and a conclusion of this project.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Research Methodology and Methods

#### 2.1 Locating my research in the Methodological Spectrum

Traditionally, methodology in social sciences is taken to be a discipline based in a particular philosophy and which is used to examine the methods used or which are supposed to be used to produce knowledge. Methodology sets procedures to be used in generation or testing of propositions by those who produce knowledge; this means, scientific knowledge is only valid if its production conforms to the prescribed procedures that must be justified by philosophical arguments because access to scientific knowledge is thought to be only possible through legitimate and logical procedure, philosophically justified. These methodological prescriptions are resultant from epistemology (a conception of form of knowledge that are possible and the conditions in which valid knowledge may be achieved), and from ontology (a conception of what exists) (Hindess 1977, Babbie and Mouton 2001). Any particular epistemology is concerned with addressing the following; what is knowledge? How is knowledge acquired? And to what extent is it possible for a given subject or entity to be known? Epistemology is thus related to arriving at the varying notions of truth, belief and justification (Babbie and Mouton 2001). In the following, I discuss the different epistemological and methodological assumption, by ways of exploring the spectrum. Then, I show how I located my research in this spectrum.

In many ways, knowledge can be acquired beforehand; that is, knowledge that is acquired without experience, usually by reason (Kant 1967). Idealists believe that knowledge is primarily (at least in some areas) acquired by *a priori* processes or that which is inherent; for example, in the form of concepts not derived from experience (Kant 1967). The relevant theoretical processes often go by the name “intuition”, the relevant theoretical concepts may purportedly be part of the structure of the human mind (as in Kant's theory of transcendental idealism), or they may be said to exist independently of the mind. A posteriori knowledge is knowledge that is known by experience (that is, it is empirical, or arrived at afterward) (Russell in Smith 2005). In a research epistemology, the main concern is acquiring the posteriori knowledge; that is, we set out to understand or know about experience.

It has been argued that the case for any research methodology, whether qualitative or quantitative, cannot be considered or presented in the abstract. The choice and adequacy of a method embodies a variety of assumptions regarding the nature of knowledge and the methods through which that knowledge can be obtained, as well as a set of root assumptions about the nature of the phenomena to be investigated (Morgan and Smircich 1980), providing the grounds for social theory. This is to say that all approaches to social science are based on interrelated sets of assumptions regarding ontology, human nature, and epistemology (Morgan and Smircich 1980).

Table 1: **Network of Basic Assumptions Characterizing the Subjective-Objective Debate within Social Science** (Source: Morgan and Smircich (1980) '*The case for qualitative research*')

	← Subjectivist Approaches to Social Science			Objectivist Approaches to Social Science →		
<b>Core Ontological Assumptions</b>	Reality as a projection of human imagination	Reality as a social construction	Reality as a realm of symbolic discourse	Reality as a contextual field of information	Reality as a concrete process	Reality as a concrete structure
<b>Assumptions About Human Nature</b>	Man as pure spirit, being, consciousness,	Man as a social constructor, the symbol creator	Man as an actor, the symbolic user	Man as an information processor	Man as an adaptor	Man as a responder
<b>Basic Epistemological Stance</b>	To obtain phenomenological insights, revelation	To understand how social reality is created	To understand patterns of symbolic discourse	To map context	To study systems, process, change	To construct a positivist science
<b>Some Favoured Metaphors</b>	transcendental	Language game, accomplishment, text	Theatre, culture	cybernetic	organism	Machine
<b>Research Methods</b>	Exploration of pure subjectivity	Hermeneutics	Symbolic analysis	Contextual analysis of Gestalten	Historical analysis	Lab experiments, survey
<b>Examples of research</b>	Phenomenology	Ethnomethodology	Social Action Theory	Cybernetics	Open systems theory	Behaviourism, Social Learning Theory

What we have in the table above is a range of opinions about ontology and human nature, which lend to specific epistemology and methodology. Morgan and Smircich (1980) stipulate that moving from assumption to the next along the subjective-objective continuum changes the nature of what constitutes adequate knowledge. For example, an objectivist view of the social world as a concrete structure encourages an epistemological stance that emphasizes the importance of studying the nature of relationships among the elements constituting that structure. Knowledge of the social world from this point of departure suggests a need to understand and map out the social structure, and gives rise to the epistemology of positivism, emphasizing an empirical analysis of concrete relationships in an external social world (Morgan and Smircich 1980, p.493). It encourages a concern for an “objective” form of knowledge that specifies the precise nature of laws, regularities, and relationships among phenomena measured in terms of social “facts” (Morgan and Smircich 1980, p.493); but as we note below positivism is laden with its own inherent limitations as a way of acquiring social knowledge.

Positivism is a variant of posteriori knowledge that is rooted on the insistence that we can only access reality through experience (Hindess 1977; Smith 2005). Smith (2005) stipulates that the emphasis on experience is clearly rooted in positivists need to clean out value-laden and metaphysical assumptions from the production of scientific knowledge. Babbie and Mouton (2001) define positivist tradition as the ideas (developed by Auguste Comte 1826-1829) that social science should emulate the methodology and logic of the natural sciences. Smith outlines five principles of positivism:

I) Naturalism or the idea that the assumptions and methods of the scientific method can and should be applied to social sciences, II) Phenomenolism - that is the notion that we can acquire knowledge through direct observation, III) nominalism that scientific concepts capture real objects and therefore statements that cannot be validated by direct observation or true by definition are meaningless, IV) Atomism-the idea that an object of study should be broken down into its smallest component pieces, V) The idea of scientific laws ,that direct observation can generate explanations that are universal in application.VI) A separation of facts and values to avoid metaphysical speculation (Smith 2005,p.XXII).

Some of these positivist assumptions are, however, clearly problematic in social sciences (Morgan and Smircich 1980). For example, the positivist assumption that the knowledge we produce could and should be value free, and therefore objective, risks having culturally specific

values and preconceptions of a particular place or time concealed as scientific facts (Smith 2005). Smith (2005) further highlights the various instances where the pre-existing notions of race, gender, age and class tend to be reproduced in what is fallaciously considered to be rigorous and impartial scientific accounts. Further, the positivist epistemology assertion of atomism in social sciences translates to a great focus on the individual with the assumption that it is the individual who makes up the collective and thus the society can be understood by studying the individual. Yet, we know that individual action is to a great extent shaped and influenced by the wider social values and beliefs of their society.

On the furthest end of the debate, is the highly subjectivist view of reality as a projection of individual imagination. Subjectivity defies the positivist grounds of knowledge in favour of an epistemology that emphasizes the importance of understanding the processes through which human beings concretize their relationship to their world (Babbie and Mouton 2001). This phenomenological/interpretivist perspective, based on the work of Alfred Schultz (1932, 1945, 1970) challenges the idea that there can be any form of “objective knowledge” that can be quantified and transmitted in a tangible form; because the knowledge thus created is, often than not, an expression of the manner in which the scientist as a human being has subjectively imposed a personal frame of reference on the world. The question here is whether or not human beings can ever achieve any form of knowledge that is independent of their own subjective construction, since they are the agents through which knowledge is perceived or experienced (Morgan and Smircich 1980). Babbie and Mouton (2001) also observe that subjective approaches to social science are rooted in the mental metaphor - that is the centrality of human consciousness, this represents a distinct departure from positivists’ emphasis to similarities between natural objects and social sciences to an emphasis on their differences. Thus, it is not the human body but the human mind or consciousness that becomes the analogy between the study of man and the study of society; here people are seen as conscious, self-directing, symbolic human beings.

Phenomenology takes into consideration the fact that human beings are engaged in the process of making sense of their life world, and are always in the process of interpreting, creating, defining, giving meaning to, justifying and rationalizing their actions (Babbie and Mouton 2001, p.28). According to Schultz (1945,p. 533-576), humans have multiple realities, each with its own



special and separate style of existence what he calls sub-universe that is comprised of the world of physical things, the world of science, the world of ideal relations, the various supernatural worlds of mythology and religion. These sub-worlds are also the world of everyday life referring to the inter-subjective world that humans share. Subjective approach has also benefited from ethnomethodology, the work of Harold Garfinkel. Human beings create their realities in the most fundamental ways, in an attempt to make their world intelligible to themselves and to others. They are not simply actors interpreting their situations in meaningful ways, for there are no situations other than those which individuals bring into being through their own creative activity. Individuals may work together to create a shared reality, but that reality is still a subjective construction capable of disappearing the moment its members cease to sustain it as such. Reality appears as real to individuals because of human acts of conscious or unwitting collusion. Further contribution to human subjectivity is made by the social action theory, the work of George Herbert Mead; symbolic interactionism gives emphasis to the role the inner mental processes like minds and selves play in subjective experiences (Babbie and Mouton 2001).

Clearly, it is difficult to posit my research on either ends of the objective or subjective spectrum. But given that issues of ethnicity, democratization and conflicts are mainly interpretivist in nature, the most suitable ontological and epistemological approach would be a subjective approach. In this research, I sought to explore issues of how ethnicity is constructed, constituted, understood and how they affect citizenship in the nation state as well as the outcomes of democratic processes. These simply interrogated through a “factual” positivist approach becomes problematic because people’s understanding and interpretation of various social processes do vary and are often located within a particular social setting, geography and time. It is also hard to generalize for example the causes or motivators of conflict as well as peoples attachments to ethnic identities as they are clearly subjective. For example, in analysing voting behaviour in Kenya, a positivist approach would only go as far as highlighting a pattern of ethnic voting; that is to highlight through statistical data (election results) that Luo’s voted for a Luo candidate, Kikuyus voted for a Kikuyu candidate and so on, but would not adequately shed light on what beliefs or ideologies motivate such behaviour. My research therefore sought to appropriate a qualitative approach. This is not a total dismissal that there are objective world, and this is not to say that I am only interested in individual subjective interpretation of own world.

I have placed emphasis on the subjective approach for another reason. In this study, I paid attention to or appropriated two theoretical frameworks: Mamdani's bifurcated state and Habermas communicative action. Their focus on the interplay of 'agency' and 'structure' in shaping meaning, social reality, symbolic discourse and social action are so central to my purpose. This, therefore, has influence in some ways my choice for a more a qualitative approach.

## **2.2 Qualitative Approach in My research**

This research is predominantly based on publicly available records and data. This involved studying and analysing textual and nominal data on the themes of ethnicity, democracy and conflict in Kenya. The main sources were archival information on ethnicity, speeches of prominent Kenyan figures, publications and records from various local and international newspaper articles, election campaigns and debates, data on voting patterns and election results media products like political gatherings, speeches or interviews, political satires and, increasingly parliamentary discussions essays, journals, as well as fiction and non-fiction books. I have also used other cultural and social productions such as blogs, documentaries (and Podcasts) and You Tube videos. Secondary data from opinion polls done by both local and international organizations such as Gallup were also used. These were insightful in capturing the historical and contemporary perspectives on ethnicity and state building in Kenya as well as in useful in the comparative analysis of similarities and differences of ethnic discourses in different parts of Kenya.

Generally, this research involved interrogating and focusing on the political, economic and social context of ethnicity, state building, nationalisation and democratization in Kenya. I employed a discourse-historical approach that is 'to integrate texts of as many different genres as possible, as well as capture the historical dimension' (Wodak 1999, p.188) of ethnicity and conflict, democratization and nationalization of politics in Kenya. 'The historical background and the original sources in which discursive "events" are embedded' is useful in understanding the ways in which particular types and genres of social and political discourse are subject to prolonged change' (Wodak 1999, p.188). For example, how do people make sense of their own ethnic

identity and how are collectives and groups – ‘various types of ‘us’ and ‘them’ discursively formed and maintained through text and talk?’(Nikander 2006, p.5)

Another important feature of this research is that I made a cross-reference to other studies and findings; that is, the use of existing discourses, reading and being familiar with the literature and other pieces of analysis. This not only helps to build the analytic insight needed, but also to make applicable and justifiable interpretations in ways that add to existing body of analysis (Nikander 2006).

## **2.3 Discourse Analysis**

Discourse analysis, one that is informed by qualitative approach, is based on a solid social constructionist epistemology; this is the idea that language is much more than an ordinary mirror of the world and phenomena ‘out-there’ (Nikander 2006, p.2). It is premised on the belief that discourse is of fundamental importance in constructing the ideas, social processes and phenomena that make up our social world (Nikander 2006; Ruiz 2009; Fairclough 2012). Discourse analysis is not seen just as a method but often as a methodology or as a theoretical perspective, and often theory and method are linked (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002; Phillips & Hardy 2002; Morgan 2010). Discourse analysis is also taken to be a general epistemological view on social life that combines both methodological and conceptual elements (Wood & Kroger 2000; Nikander 2006). It is also seen as an analytic approach (Schenkein 1978; Gill 1996; Nikander 2006), or as craft skill or form of scholarship (Nikander 2006, p.2).

Discourse analysis is a broad and general concept for the many traditions concerned with the analysis of ideas, social processes and phenomena. Discourse is not limited to a linguistic analysis but is ‘anything from a historical monument, *alieu de mémoire*, a policy, a political strategy, narratives in a restricted or broad sense of the term, text, talk, a speech, topic-related conversations, to language per se’ (Wodak and Meyer 2008,p.2-3). ‘Discourses are seen as constructive as they do not simply describe the social world, but are the mode through which the world of “reality” emerges’ (Macleod n.d., p.6). Six models of discourse analysis have been identified: Conversation Analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis, Interactional Sociolinguistics,

Bakhtinian Research, Foucauldian Research, Discursive Psychology (see Hanks 1987, Koller 2012):

**Conversation Analysis (CA)** is an approach to the study of social interaction that studies both verbal and non-verbal conduct in everyday life situations. Based on the ethnomethodology of Erving Goffman (1958) and Harold Garfinkel (1967), it was developed as discipline in the 1960s through the collaborative work of Harvey Sacks, Emanuel schegloff and Gail Jefferson (Fairclough 1992; Mazeland 2006; Paul ten Have 2007; Hutchby and Wooffitt 2008). It is an inductive data driven process that relies heavily on an objectivist, realist position (Mazeland 2006; Paul ten Have 2007; Morgan 2010). The ‘main objective of CA is to uncover the often tacit reasoning procedures and sociolinguistic underlying the production and interpretation of talk in organized sequence of interaction’ (Hutchby and Wooffitt 2008, p.12). Simply put, CA assists with uncovering how participants ‘understand and response to one another in their turn at talk’, emphasis is often placed on how the series of actions in interactional conversations are generated (Hutchby and Wooffitt 2008, p.12). Conversation analysis only applies to the study of spoken language or conversation in interaction and not written text. It seeks to find and describe patterns within language without delving into subjective interpretation (Morgan 2010). In this case, the methods used are value-neutral. It is premised on the assumption that social interaction is orderly, and that such order maybe found within naturally occurring materials of interaction (talk). Indeed in any conversation, participants can often be seen to orient to the normative and expected patterns in conversation (Morgan 2010). Conducting a conversation analysis begins with making an audio and/or video recording of conversation in a casual or natural setting and then transcribed (Mazeland 2006; Hutchby and Wooffitt 2008). In CA, a transcription involves ‘carefully listening to how and where utterances are produced and the interpretative work of the transcriber as a competent member of the culture under investigation’ (Mazeland 2006, p.153).

**Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)** is an interdisciplinary field that includes linguistics, semiotics and discourse analysis (the field of discourse studies), and is concerned with theorising and researching social processes and social change. Discourse constitutes society and culture, it is social action, and it is historical, interpretative and explanatory; through discourse, the link between text and society is mediated (van Dijk 1991). Discourse is a form of social action.

Examples of CDA include the subject of racism and/or ethnicity (van Dijk 1995), and welfare reform (Fairclough 2001). It tends to be deeply political in its analysis of societal policies and practices. CDA studies ‘the way social power<sup>8</sup> abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context’ (van Dijk 2001, p.352). In dealing with the notion of power, different types of power can be analysed depending on the various resources utilized by different segments or institutions in society to exercise such power, for example, the state may employ its coercive power through the official military or adopt a privatized state violence through informal militant groups, the rich may use their wealth to have influence and ordinary citizens may exercise their power based on knowledge or information (van Dijk 2001). Moreover, CDA also seeks to analyse the relationship between discourse and power, it identifies that access and control of public discourse is itself a power resource. According to van Dijk (2001, p.355) two research questions can be raised here:

1. How do (more) powerful groups control public discourse?
- 2 How does such discourse control mind and action of (less) powerful groups, and what are the social consequences of such control, such as social inequality?

It is well known that members of more powerful social groups and institutions tend to have more or less exclusive access to, and control over, one or more types of public discourse. This provides them with leverage in their field of operation; for example, ‘teachers’ educational discourse, journalists’ media discourse, lawyers’ legal discourse, and politicians’ policy and other public political discourse’ (van Dijk 2001, p.356). An important consideration in my research is ethnicised political discourse<sup>9</sup>; given the role of political discourse in the enactment, reproduction, and legitimization of power and domination, critical discourse analysis shows how elites play a prominent role in reproducing dominant discourses. Furthermore, considering that CDA illustrates a desire for positive political change, a real understanding of what goes on in any particular interactional experience is needed. Social interactions and processes are constituted at macro or micro level but their effect on societal order is not static but fluid. For

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<sup>8</sup> Defined here in terms of control (van Dijk 2001)

<sup>9</sup> Keep in mind that the term is indicative of at least two possibilities: first, it could mean a discourse which is itself political but not necessarily on a matter that is political by nature, e.g. politicization of issues around ethnicity; second, it could refer to an analysis of political discourse as simply an example of discourse type (Wilson 2001). Both notions are relevant in this study.

example a political policy issued by the state at the macro level will have an impact on social interaction or processes at the micro level. On the hand a social interaction between two individuals at a micro level, for example one that results in one individual killing the other individual based on ethnic or racial prejudice may easily explode into conflict between the represented ethnic groups at the state (macro) level.

Controlling people's minds is a key factor in reproducing dominance and hegemony (van Dijk 2001). People tend to readily accept beliefs, knowledge, and opinions from what they see as authoritative, trustworthy, or credible sources, such as scholars, experts, professionals, or reliable media (van Dijk 2001, p.357). In other situations, people may be forced to accept a certain discourse - for example, in education and in many job situations, where people are obliged to adopt institutional "traditions or culture". This may also be enacted by limiting access to alternative public discourse (van Dijk 2001) - for example, by controlling or censoring media content and education curriculum. Lastly, recipients may not have the information and personal or collective values necessary to challenge the discourses or public material they are exposed to (Wodak 1987; van Dijk 2001).

**Interactional sociolinguistics (IS)** is associated with anthropology, and is frequently concerned with culturally identified interactional strategies. Interactional sociolinguistics is an analysis of power within linguistic practices, a search for patterns within language as a system (Morgan 2010). It is similar to conversation analysis, but interactional sociolinguistics is more interested in members' interpretations of language, which is believed form methods of dominance and not the words themselves (Morgan 2010, p.2). The IS framework is often used to study ordinary conversation, although IS research has also dealt with other 'speech genres, such as interviews, public lectures, and classroom discourse, and on specific strategies, such as asking questions and telling stories' (Tannen 1992,p.9). Sociolinguistics includes interethnic communications (Gumpertz 1982), and culture, gender and power (Tannen 1993).

In analysing communicative interactions, a common dilemma presented by today's culturally diverse environments is theoretical divisions on how to deal with linguistic and cultural differences (Gumperz 2001). There are those who following Bourdieu, posit that communicative

practices are shaped by *habitus*; the inherent dispositions to act and to perceive the world in a way that mirrors the macro-societal conditions, political and economic forces, and relationships of power in which they were acquired (Gumperz 2001). Those who adopt this view are of the opinion that it is this conditioning factor that we must focus on, if we want to get insights into the nature of diversity. Those who take a more constructivist<sup>10</sup> approach, argue that given that our life worlds are shaped through interaction, we should focus on learning more about the way localized interactive processes work before we can turn to research on diversity (Gumperz 2001). 'IS seeks to bridge the gap between these two approaches by focusing on communicative practice as the everyday world site where societal and interactive forces merge' (Gumperz 2001, p.218). Communicative practice is by definition dependent on the discursive practices of actors who are acting in pursuit of their goals and aspirations (Hanks 1996). This means that communicative action as a practice does not only allude to 'individuals' encoding and decoding messages, but is an interactive process where individuals 'engage in an ongoing process of negotiation, both to infer what others intend to convey and to monitor how one's own contributions are received' (Gumperz 2001,p.218).

One such example of the IS research is the schematization of politeness phenomena (Tannen 1992). It has been observed that speakers serve two "face" requirements: the 'positive face' used to demonstrate the need for involvement with others, and the 'negative face' used to demonstrate the need not to offend others (Goffman 1967). These linguistic choices of interaction are drawn from the application of underlying 'rules of rapport' (Lakoff 1979). Through this framework, we can observe among other things the way speakers 'choose not to say exactly what they mean, in order to serve the social requirements of interaction' (Lakoff 1979)

**Bakhtinian research** – is an integral approach within dialogic philosophy, which emphasises on dialogue as an ongoing social process of meaning making that occurs between people as subjects (Bakhtin 1984; Juzwik 2001, Maguire 2006). Bakhtinian philosophy embraces morality and discourse as central tenets for inquiry (Juzwik 2001). According to Bakhtin (1984), the meaning found in any dialogue is unique to the sender and recipient based upon their personal understanding of the world as influenced by the socio-cultural background. Bakhtin focus on

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<sup>10</sup> Constructivism looks at the social genesis of schemes of perception, thought, and action.

language in action as a living source of insight and renewal (Maguire 2006). For Bakhtin's language is not just about the written or spoken word alone but also the way reality is perceived in 'the form of still latent, unuttered future work', this includes the interpretation of tone, sound and body language (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 90). A Bakhtinian view of utterance includes both the language itself and the way it is interpreted in action, as an answerable act, utterance is only achieved when it is answerable (Bakhtin 1990, Maguire 2006). Hence attention is given to the form and content of the language.

**Foucauldian research** - in this tradition, 'discourse' is defined as a group of statements, objects or events that represent knowledge about, or construct, a particular topic (Foucault 1972, 1982). Data is in this case, anything that may be analysed for meaning; language, text, pictures, events and objects. There are no boundaries between data and context (Morgan 2010, p.3). For Michel Foucault, 'discourse is a system of representations involving the production of power/knowledge through language' (Morgan 2010, p.3). Therefore, 'discourse analysis' is an analysis of the ways in which a topic has been constructed within a society, a historical analysis of the development of a specific form of knowledge. This view is premised on the notion that language constructs and maintains the social world. Foucault asserted that nothing exists outside of discourse - that is, things do exist, but only take on meaning through discourse. The focus on power makes discourse analysis useful for a critical analysis and evaluation of many aspects of health, wellbeing and social care (Morgan 2010).

**Discursive psychology** is heavily influenced by conversation analysis, but also incorporates Bakhtinian and Foucauldian principles, therefore presenting as a hybrid of discourse analysis traditions (Morgan 2010, Harre 2001). Within this approach, the turn to discourse and language in psychology has involved a shift to studying talk in itself; in this approach, challenges the ways in which psychological phenomena (identity, memory, personality, attitudes) are asserted; instead it underlines that these are not entities in themselves, rather they are constituted through language (Morgan 2010, p.2). Concepts within discursive psychology include interpretive repertoires, ideological dilemmas, and subject positions (Morgan 2010, p.3).



One limitation of discourse analysis is that the array of options available through the various traditions can render issues of methodology problematic, as each tradition has its own epistemological position, concepts, procedures, and a particular understanding of discourse and discourse analysis (Morgan 2010, p.4). However, it has been argued that analysts may adopt their own methodological procedures, guided by the specific topic, research question and point of focus, the researcher is required to provide a detailed explanation of their procedure with justification for their choices (Morgan 2010, p. 5; Taylor, 2001). As part of this research, the venture between critical discourse analysis and Foucauldian tradition of are useful. They are also very similar. As I understand it, the Foucauldian tradition of discourse analysis can comfortably sit within the category of critical discourse analysis.

Critical discourse analysis is applicable to every situation and almost every subject. The techniques can reveal often unspoken and unacknowledged aspects of human behaviour, making salient either hidden or dominant discourses that maintain marginalised positions in society. They can reveal or help to construct a variety of new and alternative social subject positions that are available, which in itself can be very empowering to the most vulnerable individuals. No technology or funds are necessary and authoritative discourse analysis can lead to fundamental changes in the practices of an institution, the profession, and society as a whole. Although discourse analysis does not give factual answers, it provides better insight/knowledge based on continuous debate and argumentation because human beings are subjective. A reflexive approach is integrated in instances where researchers cannot be neutral observers (Bourdieu 1986).

### **2.3.1 Limitations: Issues of Reliability and Validity**

Critical discourse analysis relies fundamentally upon interpretation. Considering there is no hard data provided through discourse analysis, the reliability and the validity of one's research/findings depend on the force and logic of one's arguments. Even the best-constructed arguments are subject to their own deconstructive reading and counter-interpretations. The validity of critical analysis is, therefore, dependent on the quality of the discussions or arguments. Despite this fact, well-founded arguments remain authoritative over time and have concrete applications. It is, therefore, important to be aware that each communicative event e.g. a speech or text allows numerous interpretations, linked to the positions of the readers', listeners',

or viewers' respective contexts and levels of information (Wodak 2006). As Morgan (2010, p.1) puts it 'discourse analysis speaks of multiple versions of reality, multiple 'truths', which are constructed through texts, therefore there are correspondingly multiple versions of analyses'. And that language becomes a social presentation or a social action – 'it is productive and constitutive (language both creates social phenomena and is representative of social phenomena)' (Morgan 2010, p.1).

## **2.4 Critical Discourse Analysis in My Research**

I chose critical discourse analysis for my research because of its suitability to the nature of the research topic and questions I sought to address. I have already indicated in the previous section that critical discourse analysis is concerned with theorising and researching identity issues, socio-political processes, social relationships, and ideologies; system of knowledge, power and social change. CDA seeks to 'de-mystifying ideologies<sup>11</sup> and power<sup>12</sup> through the systematic and retroductable investigation of semiotic data (written, spoken or visual)' (Fairclough 2001, p.218). Moreover, this discourse tradition illustrates a desire for positive political change. These are pertinent issues in my study. Three aspects of the constructive effects of discourse have been raised. These are the construction of: '(1) 'social identities', 'subject positions', or types of 'self'; (2) social relationships between people; and (3) systems of knowledge and belief (Fairclough 1992, p.137-200). Below I elaborate on them further:

Analysis of the construction of social identities, critical discourse analysis is very instrumental in analysing collective identity such as ethnicity or race. Koller stipulates that critical discourse analysis is premised on the understanding that collective identity is based on cognitive and sentimental components and is therefore subject to change through negotiation in discourse (2012,p.20). Koller sees 'collective identities as socio-cognitive representations, which are held by people who identify as members of a group', which is 'constructed, negotiated and changed through discursive interaction within and between groups' (2012, p.20). In the construction of

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<sup>11</sup> 'Ideologies are representations of aspects of the world which contribute to establishing and maintaining relations of power, domination and exploitation. They may be enacted in ways of interaction (and therefore in genres) and inculcated in ways of being identities (and therefore styles)' (Fairclough, 2003,p. 218)

<sup>12</sup> Here, CDA 'analyses the language use of those in power, who are responsible for the existence of inequalities' (Wodak and Fairclough 2008,p.9)

social identities, the critical approach postulates that a repetitive exposure of recipients to a particular text (discourse), under similar conditions of reception, may help to align their representations, interpretations and meaning with that of the text producer thereby giving the producer an advantage within the group. However, critical discourse analysis also presupposes that social actors can question and reject the dominant views of text producers (Koller 2012). Given that recipients ‘actively co-construct the texts’ meaning, adopting or changing the representations they are confronted with according to their own background, makes the success of any attempt at cognitive alignment uncertain’ (Koller 2012,p.23). Critical discourse analysis espouses that collective identity such as ethnic identities are not static or based on pure genetics but are socio-cognitive representations that are fluid.

Analysis of social relationship between people, for example, in analysing ethnicised discourses in relation to the distribution of power and resources. This raises the question of discursive consciousness (Nikander 2006) or group awareness and how it is projected through and within the discourses of ethnic collectives, for example on questions of moral ethnicity, leadership suitability and competitive politics (democracy). Discursive consciousness is ‘a focus on rhetorical organization, on the persuasive and morally consequential aspects of language use’ (Nikander 2006, p.9). Through discourse analysis we can deconstruct the processes through which power is legitimized, reproduced and enacted in speeches and texts of dominant ethnic groups and political leaders and institutions in Kenya. This involves looking for patterns and order in how text (discourse) and talk are organized and for how intersubjective understanding, social life and how a variety of institutional practices are accomplished, constructed and reproduced in the process (Nikander 2006).

Critical discourse analysis is useful in uncovering how politicians use language, ‘reasons’ or persuasion for personal interests. Habermas (1987), theory of Communicative Action becomes useful in understanding how ethnic rationality is sustained in Kenya. This is valuable in understanding how the careful selection of ethnic history, remembered memories and culture that appeals to the people is often used by the political elite to mobilise ethnic support for their political agendas in multi-ethnic societies. Emphasizing Habermas’ notion of rationality, communicative action refers to the interaction of at least two subjects capable of speech and action who establish interpersonal relations either by verbal and non-verbal means. As Habermas

(1984,p.22) puts it, 'rationality is understood to be a disposition of speaking and acting subjects that are expressed in modes of behaviour for which there are good reasons or grounds'. These are what Habermas calls the three validity claims: that the statement made is true, normatively right and therefore legitimate, and the visible intention of the speaker as it is expressed, that is, it is sincere (1984, p.99). With these three claims the validity for utterance in communication is focused on reaching a common understanding. Further, these three validity claims relate to the ontological use of language; that is, as it relates to the objective world, the social world and the subjective world (Habermas 1984, p.100).

Analysing the systems of knowledge and belief, critical discourse analysis is useful in conducting a critical approach to taken-for-granted knowledge. Our knowledge of the world should not be treated as objective truth. Reality is only accessible to us through categories; thus, our knowledge and representations of the world are not reflections of the reality 'out there', but rather are products of our ways of categorising the world, or, in discursive analytical terms, products of discourse (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, p.5). Social groups are formed through knowledge about, and the expectations of the social groups. Stereotypes of social groups are born of a pool of knowledge structures, which distinguish the behaviour of group members as exclusive, while 'exceptions are ignored or explained by contextual factors' (Kunda 1999, p.313-94). Stereotypes are very useful in creating; reproducing and or maintaining social prejudice against other social groups, in discussing this point, Koller (2012, p.21) point out that:

Stereotypes are cognitively efficient in that they are automatically activated when encountering a member of a social group with little if any recourse to the 'data' at hand. While they thus help to make sense of the perceived behaviour, attributes and attitudes in others, they gloss over intra-group differences and the resulting prejudice is bound to be harmful for the social relations between, and the self-image of, members of a particular group. This is especially the case for negative stereotypes.

Another problem with stereotypes is that the characteristics of a sub-category come to stand for the whole category; this can be useful in explaining how certain groups racially or ethnically position themselves above others in a society. For example, in Kenya, Kikuyu political leaders have often used the practice of circumcision of males within their group to explain their suitability for top leadership in the country. Luos, on the other hand, emphasize their supposed intellectual superiority over others.

The changing nature of ethnic formations – critical discourse analysis incorporates a historical and contextual analysis of social phenomena. Here, critical discourse analysis approach is useful in highlighting the ‘historical and cultural specificity’ of political problems or political formations (Burr 1995 in Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, p.5). That is with the understanding of the ways in which we ‘understand and represent the world are historically and culturally specific and *contingent*: our worldviews and our identities could have been different, and they can change over time’ (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, p.5).

## 2.5 Conclusion

This study is based on a qualitative approach, adopting a sociological critical discourse analysis focusing on both textual and contextual analysis. In Critical discourse analysis, textual and contextual parameters are useful in analysing collective identity, social relationships between social and political groups i.e. ethnic or race groups, systems of knowledge and beliefs, ideologies, political discourses, power, inequalities and social change – that is, highlighting the ‘historical and cultural specificity’ of political problems or political formations. Through critical discourse analysis we can establish the nexus of these identities, relational and ideational (Fairclough 1992) issues at the micro and macro levels. Analysis of both verbal and written discourse is instrumental to this study both for practical and theoretical reasons; its practicality is based on the fact that it is accessible and examinable across time and space. It is in interpreting and interrogating the discourse that we are able to provide an explanation of the discourse as it addresses sociological aspects of the themes of this study; in this case, we consider discourse as information, ideology or a social product and social action.

Theoretically, discourse is an important way of producing and transmitting meaning. Ethnic or national identity greatly influences behaviour of social actors both within the group and outside the group; that is towards members of other communities and to the state. In this sense, the behaviour of individuals is often guided by the meaning they attribute to social issues. Discourse analysis is useful in interrogating social actions (ethnic conflicts) and how meanings attached to this are constructed through social action, talk and text. Ruiz (2009, p.3) writes:

Social action is guided by the meaning that individuals attach to their actions, we must account for this meaning when attempting to understand and explain the action. Yet meaning is not only a product of individual constraints and beliefs. Instead, the meanings that guide individual actions are, to a large degree, socially produced and shared patterns.

Through discourse analysis we are able to analyse social action through looking at the language or speech, in text and try to understand and interpret them in their particular context. Stiles (1995) confirm the ability of discourse analysis to facilitate access to the ontological and epistemological assumptions behind a project, a statement, a method of research and a system of classification'.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

#### 3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, first I focus on the broader theoretical works informing this research. As I indicated in the introductory chapter, my work is positioned within two most important pieces of work. I started with the Mamdani and Mbembe, which I tried to find a ground for these to complement each other's formulations. In the following, I outline in some detail how these informed my work. While undertaking this research, I also felt the need to expand my conceptual and theoretical thinking by adopting Habermas' thesis on public sphere and communicative action, which I explore by ways of interrogating the context and culture of politics in Kenya in the eighth chapter. Following this, I discuss the conceptual frameworks that I found useful to thinking about ethnic politics, nation, the state and (aspiring) nation-state in the continent.

#### 3.2 Broader Theoretical Frameworks

I start with Mahmoud Mamdani's thesis of a 'bifurcated state'. This formulation was very instrumental in allowing me to think about state formation and citizenship in Africa as located in a particular history and sets of practice. The most crucial lesson here is that contextualizing of issues and looking into history as a research if we are to better make sense of and unravel the foundations of the political and socio-economic currents that we see in the continent today. Mamdani's formulation in this study has to be seen in this light. However, this formulation can only be helpful in understanding the challenges the political systems and structures of the colonial past may pose to the contemporary African political economy.

Mamdani's notion of the 'bifurcated' state in Africa unpacked the historical formation of the state in the continent that finds its roots in the colonial project. Mamdani points to two modes of relating to the state with two different forms of institutions. One, of the African indigenous communities in rural areas under indigenous chiefs and customary law through 'decentralized despotism', and two, the citizens (white) 'colons' and few urbanized Africans who had civil rights through 'direct despotism'. According to Mamdani (1996, 2001), ethnicity is a colonial

political construct. This is not to say that ethnic grouping did not exist before colonial encounter, but rather they were transformed and crystallised through colonial practices. Mamdani suggests that ethnic identity should not be seen as a market based or a cultural identity, but a political identity. Mamdani (2001, p.662-663) argues, 'political identities need to be understood as specifically a consequence of the history of state formation. In the modern African nation-state, political identities are inscribed in law. In the first instance, they are legally enforced. If the law recognizes you as member of an ethnicity, and state institutions treat you as member of that particular ethnicity, then you become an ethnic being legally'. Mamdani (2001) highlights that in the same way racial identity is also conferred by the law and state institutions, and that these political identities shape our relationship to the state and to one another through the state.

Mamdani (2007) concludes that the colonial legacy is, therefore, in many ways the source of ethnic struggles that characterize the African continent. The colonialists' exercised control and power over their colonies by divide and rule strategies, making ethnicity a political identity. Those who were co-opted and cooperated enjoyed political and economic favours and protection, in return they had to work with the colonialists' against the 'uncooperative' ethnic groups. In the post-colonial African nation-state, ethnic groups who enjoyed the benefits of 'partnership' with the colonialists feel they should continue exercising control over the political and economic resources, while ethnic groups who fought against the European imperialism feel they deserve to exercise power and control over the nation-state since they fought for it.

Mamdani's theoretical formulation provides lenses through which we can critically and comparatively assess the evolution of ethnic identity; here, we move from conceptualizing ethnicity as that which was naturalized and inherited as a social and cultural entity (that acted as a resource base of identity, social cohesion, social order, and continuity), to that of capitalist, economic and political identity conferred upon Africans by colonial project (which mainly acts as a divisive, competitive and self-seeking identity). In this sense, the standpoint is that the colonial past of the African continent is a stubborn ghost that the continent has not been able to shed. Using Mamdani, this study sought to bring to the fore the dynamics of politics of ethnicity, and ethnic identification and its tension with the growing impulse to reconstitute citizenship as prime mode of relating to the state. However, even though what African political elites and role players do are framed by this colonial history and ethnicity that received salience through this



practice, these do not entirely originate from this history, which is why Mbembe's formulation becomes relevant to my thinking.

In this sense, we need to untangle the past from contemporary agency. Here, Achilles Mbembe's (2002) suggestions are constructive. For him, a view I have come to accept, the African colonial past, slavery and apartheid should not be used to depict Africans as helpless and lacking in self-expression, which he calls 'a cult of victimization'. Mbembe (2002) cautions us not to simply repeat and reproduce this 'victimization approach' which many researchers have become so obsessed with, without critically looking into the current practices and agency. To capture moments and processes of (re)appropriating different narratives, including victimhood, is what he calls 'baroque practices'. Baroque practice is a concept that is useful to thinking about forms of resistance and struggle, as well as different and interesting modes of injecting and appropriating ethnicity, which are useful pointers for this project. Mbembe's enterprise is an interjection on what has become a common practice of constructing the African past and present through the prism of *victimhood*. I repeat his quote here:

this construction of history leads to a naive and uncritical attitude....leading to an emphasis on violence as the privileged avenue for self-determination; the fetishisation of state power; the disqualification of the model of liberal democracy; and the populist and authoritarian dream of a mass society( Mbembe 2002,p.244).

Second, I located this research in Habermas' thesis of *Communicative Action and the Public sphere* which provides a theoretical basis for analysing the praxis and legitimacy of 'African democracy' as well as the openness of the public space for political debates. Communicative action is leaning towards inter-subjective understanding, the harmonization of actions through discussion and the socialization of the members of the society which should be free from deception, self-deception, strategic behaviour and domination through exercise of power (Dryzek 1990). Habermas (1987) accentuates pervasive public participation, sharing of information with the public, reaching consensus through public discussion rather than application of power, devolution of state executive power and powers of politicians. Habermas' notion of the public sphere represents a space in which citizens engage in rational discussions on matters affecting them, limiting the encroachments of the state and the economy on their private lives; the public sphere is in this sense an integral part of everyday life that enables people to interact and make sense of their lives.... 'Political discourse is understood as a form of communication that is not

exclusively defined in terms of interests' (Bolton 2005, p.2). According to Howard (2005,p.154) this requires shared text which must be published and made available to everyone, 'text' in this sense does not generally refer to the printed word but refers to the numerous forms of content we now consume offline and online that is information about political parties, political campaigns and public policy options. The entire populace must be assured that they equally have access to the same quality of information (Howard 2005, p.154). More broadly, the 'public' does not only refer to the way citizens deliberate but it also refers to the type of reasons they put forward in deliberating and that 'in democratic polities all citizens are equally empowered and authorized to participate in deliberation and reasoning about decisions that affect their lives together' (Bohman 2002,p.25).

Furthermore, Habermas' (1996) theory of communicative action and its emphasis on constitutional patriotism grounded in a shared political culture based upon standard liberal constitutional principles is important in analysing the unity, if any, and the effectiveness of the civil society<sup>13</sup> in Kenya. For Habermas (1996), this involves the creation of an effective system of law, this includes the creation of specific rights established by a particular historical legislature; law, here, is also concerned with the cooperative pursuit of collective goals and the safeguarding of collective goods as well as the rational choice of the best means of achieving these goals and goods. How is Habermas' notion of cooperation and majority rule possible in Kenya, where elections are often an ethnic census? According to Habermas (1996), in modern pluralist societies the shared political culture and institutions of the constitutional state can provide the basis for social integration because they are political and thus do not entail the dangers inherent in an appeal to pre-political nationhood. This is useful to reflecting on Kenyan state and its impulse to integrate the diverse groups through its institutionalised forms, legal and constitutional arrangements, while other sub-national forces continue to pull it to the other direction. Another important dimension to this is how citizens internalise the above, and be formed by it – for it is the shared political culture that binds, if we follow Habermas' thrust. Citizens must be socialised into the shared political culture and not be expected to assimilate into a privileged cultural form of life, and so here political integration does not necessarily mean

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<sup>13</sup> The civil society in Kenya is simply understood as 'any organized non–state actor' that advocates for the political, social and economic wellbeing of its members in particular and the citizens in general, by limiting the freedom and the ability of the state to encroach on the interests, rights and freedoms of citizens (Wanyande 2009,p.9).

pursuit of a monoculture. The state must be sensitive to the needs of cultural, linguistic and national minorities and should ensure that members of such minorities have meaningful cultural choices and can participate in their cultural practices (Habermas 1996). The challenge is however, what if sub-national formations are important political forces and are critical sources of political culture. Here I am referring to ethnic grouping as important political association and source of political culture, using Ake's (1967) thesis on political integration and political stability as a point of reference, I provide at the last chapter of this work an analytical summary of political systems in colonial and postcolonial Kenya. This takes me to the next task of spelling out how this research made use of conceptual and theoretical formulation of the nation, ethnic and state that are appropriated in this research.

### **3.3 Theorising the Ethnic Group, Nation and State**

The existing body of literature on the concepts nation and state points to contesting views on what a nation and a state is/should be. There are also various views on which of the two precede the formation of the other: Is it the state that precedes the formation of the nation? Or is it vice versa? Before grappling with the above, it is first important to at least try to understand what a nation is and what an 'ethnie' or ethnic group is, and how similar or different they are.

Gellner (2006) defines a nation as a political principle, maintaining that the political and the national unit should be congruent and that nationalism as both a sentiment and movement is inherent of this principle. He claims that 'a nation is not an inherent attribute of humanity but it now appears as such' (2006, p.1). Connor (1994) however, maintains that although it may be easy to deny claims of blood ties or kinship of a group, what really matters is often not what is, but what people believe, and therefore if a group of people believe that they are a nation, then they are a nation. Connor defines a nation as 'a group of people who feel that they are ancestrally related. It is the largest group that can command a person's loyalty because of felt kinship ties; it is, from this perspective, the fully extended family' (1994, p.202).

Kellas (1998) simply defines a nation to be a group of people who feel themselves to be a community held together by ties of history, culture and common ancestry; if we adopt this line of thought, then this translates to what are called ethnic groups or 'tribes' in Africa. Oommen

(1997) concerns himself with this common tendency to conflate a nation and an ethnic group by highlighting Anthony Smith's (1986) conception of an ethnic group as having a collective name, a common myth of descent, shared history, a distinctive shared culture, and an association with specific territory and a sense of solidarity. Oommen (1997) argues that the difficulty with such conceptualization is that it fits with the notion of a nation being an ethnic group. So, is there really any difference between a nation and an ethnic group?

For Oommen (1997, p.31) an 'ethnic group is a passive nation and nationality is an active ethnicity', that is the 'transformation of passive, often isolated and politically excluded communities into potential and actual nations, active, participant and self-conscious of their historic identities', hence that 'nations grow out of and are constructed from ethnic materials'. Furthermore, Oommen insists that there is indeed a difference between a nation and an ethnic group, and that difference is essentially to do with the territorial dimension. This arises from Oommen's (1997) definition of an ethnic group as 'a cultural collectivity that lives outside its ancestral territory' like European Jews or even African Americans. I challenge the notion that the main difference between a nation and an ethnic group is territory, based on the observation that ethnic groups in Africa and particularly in Kenya occupy clearly demarcated territories, unless we conclude that in Africa what are commonly known as ethnic groups are indeed nations, it may be argued that there are only nations in Africa and no ethnic groups. I am aware of some arguments that the territories occupied by distinct ethnic groups in Kenya, for example, are arbitrary boundaries of colonial exercise of divide and rule, and so what ethnic groups have as their territory may not be their original homeland. However, the same can be said about the states or aspiring nation-states in Africa. Either way, this continues to be reproduced and shape people's imaginations and political actions.

Smith (1998) argues that the difference between a nation and an ethnic group is that a nation has acquired its own state. It is clearly apparent that modern African states because of the colonial history of state formation present conceptual intricacies. Firstly, we can think of a nation as that which has come about through the integration of different ethnic groups (nations) into one political and administrative unit (nation-state) as it is in Kenya and other African countries. Secondly, we can talk of an ethnic nation that is where an ethnic group is considered a nation in itself; that is, people with common ties of history, culture, language and common ancestry and

territory. Historically, both conceptualizations are vital in understanding the difficulties surrounding the formulation of a politically stable Kenyan nation state. Pre-modern African ethnic communities were efficiently nations in their own rights and organizations.

The relevance of a nation as a nation-state comes in when we begin to look at the contemporary African nations that were mechanically created by the European colonialists. Kenya has been a multinational and poly-ethnic society since colonialism with European, Indian, Arab and African population. Oommen (1997, p.40) argues that ‘if people with common descent, history and language lived in their ancestral territory, issues of ethnicity would not have risen’, and he points that because of colonialism and the migration, the situation is now different. Perhaps this is what informs Oommen (1997, p.31-46) in his work to assert that there are only two prerequisite for a nation to exist: common territory and communication. In this sense, what differentiates the ethnic group as a nation and the nation-state is their formulation and how the individual is integrated into their fold. This brings us to the question of whether both ethnic groups and nations are natural primordial entities that predate modernity or creations of modernity (Hameso, 1997). McCrone (1998), in his book *The Sociology of Nationalism* confirms that the debate on the origins of nations indeed falls between primordialists and modernists theses, with ethno symbolism taking a middle ground.

Primordialists perceive nations to be primordial entities embedded in human nature and history expressed in culture, language, religion. Thus, primordialism is often seen as a devotion to the conditions which existed at the beginning of creation, or continuity, which is the idea that nations are ancient and natural. Primordialists’ explanations of nations and nationalism may focus on the biological or the cultural aspects of nations. That is, that nations are made of biologically connected subjects, and that ethnic groups and nations should be seen as extended kin groups, (van den Berghe 1994; Smith 1998). The primordialist argument is made further that human sociality is based on three principles: ‘kin selection, reciprocity and coercion’ (van den Berge 1994, p.96-102; Smith 1998, p.147). Two kinds of primordialism are identified: one that focuses on the continuity of nations over the centuries, and one of recurrent perennialism, focusing on the broader recurrence of the nation as a general phenomenon (Smith 1998).

Primordialists maintain their stance based on the persistence of ethnic nationalism even in modern nation states. According to Oommen (1997, p.37-38) ‘[t]hose who pursue this

perspective see ethnicity as a latent phenomenon that exists everywhere which is invoked by deprived communities at an opportune moment when they experience erosion of existing privileged or employed to fight against longstanding denials of privileges'. Although the common assertion by modernists against primordialism is that all human communities are socially constructed and continuously changing, and it is a claim that is visible given the fluidity of ethnic groups. The point to remember is that whether ethnic groups or nations do really exist is not the question (Connor 1994). The emphasis on a common past is what gives an ethnic group or a nation its validity and what separates it from other kinds of groups. The past must be invoked because it helps to 'legitimize the present' (Isaacs 1975, p.118). As a result, most ethnic groups and nations consciously elaborate and reemphasize certain historical events to remind members (as well as outsiders) of their common origins.

For the modernists, modern nations are created through political, cultural and economic ideology of modernity, leading to the transformation from traditionalism to industrialization. Proponents of this view like Anderson (1991) argue that the convergence of capitalism and print technology on the fatal diversity of human language create the possibility of a new form of "imagined community" which in its basic morphology set the state for the modern state. For Benedict Anderson (1991, p.6-7), the nation is an "imagined political entity" that is based on cultural roots because:

- a) the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion, b) the nation is imagined as limited because even the largest of them encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations, c) it is imagined as sovereign because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely – ordained, hierarchical dynasty realm, d) Finally, it is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship.

Anderson's sentiments that a nation is imagined derive from these identified artificial and mechanistic bonds that bind people within a national boundary. He asserts that group imagination is the most important element in the constitution of national sentiments and identities (Anderson 1991), and its wide-ranging applications to tribe, religious community, identity and other forms of consciousness. Ethnicity is a product of the imagination, and imagination must work on substance. For most ethnic groups in Kenya, this substance is

language, territory (ancestral land) and tradition. Anderson (1991), however, stresses the point that nations are imagined and created as opposed to Gellner's claim that nations are fabrications or falsifications because such a view alludes to the belief that true communities therefore do exist out there. Anderson argues that 'all communities larger than a village are imagined' (1991, p.6). Others assert that modern nations are recreations of medieval realities (McCrone 1998). Smith (1998) also points out that myths, symbols and cultural practices are the key to making the modern nation, and they provide a sense of common origin, a sense of common history and memories and a way of life; he argues that more often ethnic nationalism require passions and not merely interests as has been the focus of rational actor theorists looking at ethnicity.

For Kedourie, the question of nationalism is grounded on the observation that 'that humanity is naturally divided into nations, that nations are known by certain characteristics which can be established, and that the only legitimate type of government is national self-government (1960,p. 9).' Modernists believe that nations and national sentiments came into existence concurrent to the state making period in the 18th century; a time which ushered in the transformation of Western societies from agricultural to industrial, driven by the ideology of modernity (McCrone 1998). Nationalism, in this sense, is the result of ambitious social engineering, consciously stirring up and manipulating the emotions of the masses and therefore the discursive form for modern claims to political self-determination. This is also a shared sentiment, in Eli Kedourie's (1960) views, that perceive nationalism as a "conspiracy" developed by German Romantic intellectuals, an apparatus for manipulating public feelings for political gains.

In the *Invention of Tradition*, Hobsbown (1994) argues that the traditions of nations and nationalism are invented by ambitious 'social engineers' consciously rousing and manipulating the emotions of the masses, resulting in the deliberative forms for modern claims to political autonomy. Hobsbown (1994) claims that three innovations led to the development of nations: the first was the development of a secular equivalent of the church-primary education, second was the invention of public ceremonies and thirdly the mass production of public monuments, all of which became the avenues to transmit traditions' that defined the nation as distinct entity.

Ethno symbolists like Smith stress the continuity between pre-modern and modern forms of social cohesion without undermining the changes brought about by modernity. For Smith (1998), myths, symbols and cultural practices are the key to making the modern nations; they provide a

sense of common origin, a sense of common history and memories and a way of life. Smith (1998) argues that, more often, nationalism require passions and not merely interests, as has been the focus of rational actor theorists looking at nationalism. In modern nations and nationalism, this sense of continuity in national identities is expressed in myths of common history, culture, tradition, language myths, memories, values, traditions and symbols. Smith (1998) acknowledges that although nations cannot be seen as primordial or natural, nonetheless they are rooted in relatively ancient histories and accordingly, to ethnic consciousness. Smith (1998) agrees that nationalism, as ideology and movement, dates only from the later eighteenth century, but argues that the ethnic origins of nations are much older. Smith focuses on ethnic communities with their myths and symbols and shows that these exist in both modern and pre-modern times, and with substantial continuity through history. The origins of modern nationalism lie in the successful bureaucratization of aristocratic ethnies, which were able to transform themselves into genuine nations only in the West<sup>14</sup> (Smith 1986, p. 109). For Smith (1986, 1994, 1998), thus, nations have their roots in ethnic communities. Smith points that nations emerge from ethnic communities through what he calls 'bureaucratic incorporation'.

There are two basic kinds of ethnic origins of nations (Smith 1994, p.147-150). The first one is lateral-aristocratic ethnies that self-perpetuation by incorporating other strata of the population e.g. Persians, Egyptians Ottoman Turks. These happened through a gradual process in which the aristocratic ethnies grafted new ethnic and cultural elements on to their common fund of myths, symbols and memories and spread them from the core. Thus the lower strata and outlying regions of the society were gradually incorporated in the state, grounded upon a dominant ethnic core state that through a strong and stable administrative apparatus provided a new and wider cultural identity. The cementing of this new society is achieved through 'administrative and fiscal means and interstate warfare e.g. Anglo-French wars' (Smith 1994, p.148).

The second one is vertical ethnies, those communities that were not directly affected by state administration probably because the state represented interest partially outside its core ethnie e.g. Byzantium, Russia (Smith 1994, p.151) In this case, the fund of cultural myths, symbols, memories and values were transmitted not only from generation to generation, but also through

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<sup>14</sup>Here the emphasis is on historical and not geographical construct, referring to a type of society that describes itself as being developed, industrialised, urbanised, capitalist, secularised and modern. It comprises Western Europe, the USA (Hall 1992).



the territory occupied by the community. The main ways through which cultural diffusion occurred was 'religion with a sacred text, liturgy, rites and clergy' (Smith 1994, p.151). Smith concludes that it is the social features of salvation religions that shaped and maintained demotic ethnies, while the secularizing intelligentsia led by educator intellectuals provided the means of transformation, 'the cultural framework, new communal self-definitions and goals' (1994, p.153).

In the West, territorial centralization and consolidation went hand in hand with a growing cultural standardization. 'The indivisibility of the state entailed the cultural uniformity and homogeneity of its citizens' (Smith 1986, p.134). Indeed theories of ethno symbolism are often based on the persistence of ethno nationalism even after the nation- state formation. Proponents of ethno symbolism have often cited the tendency to ignore ethnic identity when talking about national consciousness as a major scholarly limitation in understanding nationalism. Connor (1994) points that this has emanated from the tendency to equate nationalism with loyalty to the state (patriotism) and ignore the emotional power of ethnic identities and feelings.

Another interesting ethno-symbolist perspective is that given by Hutchinson (1994, p.122), highlighting the importance of historical memory and cultural symbolism in the formation of nations. First, Hutchinson (1994) seeks to differentiate political nationalism from cultural nationalism given the tendency to conflate the two. He observes that cultural and political nationalism are competing conceptions of the nation that subsequently forms their own distinctive organisations (Hutchinson 1994). Ideally, what political nationalists seek to achieve is a polity of educated citizens under a common law or a representative national state. But, because they are likely to encounter elements in the society who do not share in their ideals, they are likely to mobilize a political constituency to achieve their goal, and in achieving this objective may resort to ethnic historical identities and become ethicized and re-traditionalized despite the fact that their objectives to secure a representative state is modernist (Hutchinson 1994).

Hutchinson points out that cultural nationalism on the other hand, encounter the state as an accidental occurrence because 'the essence of the nation is its distinctive civilization, emanating from its unique history, culture and geographical' territory (1994, p.122). Thus nations are primordial expression of being inherently connected to a creative force, and are therefore natural solidarities not founded on law, but passions implanted by nature and history. But this is only so,

symbolically because the nation, if assessed through the prism of cultural nationalism is ‘a complex of individualities with equal rights and value to the community and therefore demanding that natural differences within the nation such as sex, occupation, religion and region be respected’ (Hutchinson 1994,p.122)

Furthermore, Hutchinson discredits the claim that cultural nationalism is a ‘regressive’ (1994, p.129) response to modernization, a view pioneered by Kohn and also seen in Gellner’s work. Hutchinson’s maintains that cultural nationalism is in fact a modernizing movement, and that the invocation of the past, contrary to accepted opinion, must be seen in a positive light, for the cultural nationalist seeks not to ‘regress’ into an arcadia but rather to inspire his community to ever higher stages of development (Hutchinson 1994, p.129). The cultural nationalists are ‘moral innovators’ who establish moral regeneration of the national community rather than the achievement of an autonomous state as would the political nationalists’ (Hutchinson 1994, p.129). Here, a distinctive politics historical memory rather than language as such serves to define the national community; it is this positive vision that makes cultural nationalism a recurring force even in advanced industrial societies.

For Mamdani (1984, p.1047), the ‘nationality question requires concrete and historical analysis because it has a changing historical and class character’, and he argues that two factors constitute a nationality, one, the emergence of class structures, regularized by state power, and two, the emergence of a common language and culture as tribes were welded into a single nationality. For him, there is a difference between nationality and a nation, and this difference is the absence of a common economic life in the nationality stage (Mamdani 1984, p.1047). A nation thus emerges from a nationality as a result of the evolving modes of production from a multiplicity of subsistence production to a centralized economic unit, and in line with this view, Mamdani postulates:

In the nationality stage, the economy was pre-capitalist. To the extent production still remained predominantly for consumption (natural) economy or so-called subsistence production. Conditions of production varied greatly from one part to another within the same state. There was as yet no common economic life corresponding to a common citizenship, and no national market corresponding to the political boundaries of the state’ (1984, p.1047).

What about the notions of a nation and state? Do they constitute and mean the same thing? Are all ‘nations’ states? In which case, do they become known as nation-states? Indeed, there is a

common tendency to conflate state and nation particularly by the modernists such as Anderson, Hobsbawm and Gellner. Modernists contend that nations are not ancient and neither given nor natural and therefore point to a “nation building” period in which nations came into existence; specifically, starting with the French revolution (Smith and Hutchinson 1994; Smith, 1998). Modernists believe that nations were born as a consequence of state making in the 18th century; the transformation of societies from traditionalism to industrialization which was driven by the ideology of modernity (McCrone 1998). Gellner’s analysis of nations and nationalism places high significance to the role played by cultural transformation that took place in the agrarian society, ‘in the agro-literate polity’ and in the industrial society; ushering in the move towards nations and nationalization (Smith 1998, p.30). This shift was also aided by the emergence of the state and literacy which led to a highly stratified society where ‘power and status were aggregated according to statuses, with the elite at the top among others like the clergy (Smith 1998, p.30). Culture was tied to status through function in the society, genetics and religion. A move from an ‘agro-literate polity’ to an industrial society leads to a move from ‘low culture’ to ‘high culture’<sup>15</sup>. The high culture is achieved through ‘a mass standardized and academy-supervised education system’<sup>16</sup>, serviced by cultural specialists’ (Smith 1998, p.37) laden with values of modernity<sup>17</sup>.

This informs the tendency to assume that ethnic groups are not nations because some may not be enshrined exclusively under state bodies. Evidence in many parts of the world however, has shown that not all nations are states, consider the Jewish nation before 1948 when it officially became a state, or the Kurdish nation, or the various ethnic groups in Africa that are in themselves nations but not states. Oommen (1997, p.24), defines a state as:

A collectivity of citizens with certain civil, political and social entitlements. The civil element endows citizen with the rights of individual freedom; the political element provides them with the

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<sup>15</sup> Cultures in terms of norms and communication is a distinguishing factor of status in the ‘agro-literate’ society, in the pre-modern society they were confined to elites as a means to differentiate and separate themselves from the masses, and this is the reason why Gellner believes that nations and nationalism cannot happen before modernity (Smith 1998, p.30-32).

<sup>16</sup> ‘The public mass education binds state and culture together’ (Smith 1998, p.32), making nations and nationalism a reality.

<sup>17</sup> A modern industrial society is highly fluid and mobile. The production system here is based on a high division of labour and specialization in which people cannot escape the reality of having to meet and communicate and work with people they could never interact with in the ‘agro-literate’ society, people meet at the work place through meritocracy from the public education system (Smith 1998).

right to participate in the political process; the social element is essentially a series of entitlements to economic and social welfare.

Clearly, there is a difference between a nation and nation-state or a state. Ethnic nationalism is still nationalism, an equivalent of this in the nation state maybe called patriotism specifically in multinational or multi-ethnic states. As Oommen (1997) puts it, the individual is integrated into an ethnic group on the basis of ethnicity; however, it is citizenship that facilitates integration of the individual into the nation-state. While ethnicity is a product of attenuation between territory and culture, citizenship is what binds people of multinational and poly-ethnic groups together. What will turn this over its head is the notion that citizenship – which entail rights and obligation - as an institutional practice and forms exist within ethnic grouping, albeit in different form and content.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

I have highlighted the various conceptions of an ethnic group, nationalism, nation-state and their origins. Indeed the debate on nations (also ethnic nations) and nationalism, as Smith confirms, has been threefold: the ‘essence’ of the nation as opposed to its constructed form, the antiquity of the nation versus its purely modern form, and the cultural basis of nationalism versus its political aspirations.

The primordialist thesis by Pierre van den Berghe rests on the belief that genetic link is the origin of ethnic groups; that is, nations came from the primordialist model of kinship and kin selection and later extended that model to much larger societies. But it is known that no ethnic group can prove pure genetic association because of in-group incorporations and intermarriages, thus the biological thesis of ethnic groups and even nations is not plausible. However, it remains that ethnic communities believe that they share a common ancestry, heritage and history, normally expressed in myths<sup>18</sup>, symbols<sup>19</sup> and communication. What is relevant here is not the ‘genesis but the persistence’ of ethnic groups (Armstrong cited in Smith 1998, p.181) as a basis for nations and nationalism. Smith (1998) points that ethnies and nations form part of a continuum and it is

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<sup>18</sup> ‘Myths of a common and unique origin in time and place are significant for the sense of ethnic community and marks the foundation point of the groups history, and hence individuality’ (Smith, 1981 cited in Smith 1998, p.191).

<sup>19</sup> These are emblems, hymns, festivals, habitats, customs, linguistic codes, sacred places acted as powerful reminders of their distinctive culture and fate of the ethnic community (Smith 1981, cited in Smith 1998, p.191).

not the forms they take that really matters but persisting group perceptions and sentiments themselves, and this is why British citizens relate to the state as British, but they are often ordinarily English, Welsh, Scottish and many other ethnic variants.

Although modernists rightly claim that it was the industrial revolution of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe that brought about culture and ethnic identity to the fore as a basis for modern nations-states that emerged after the American and French revolutions, nations, clearly, could not have just emerged from a vacuum. It could only have been through already existing forms of social organisations that a transition and change occurred overtime leading to nations as we know them today, signifying the changing nature of ethnic formations. I agree with Smith's assertion that modernists only tell 'half the story'. The modernist thought is fleeting because, as Armstrong (1994) argues, it is not an approach based on a conception of long-term history. It is ironical that modernists only perceive nations and nationalism through political eyes of the state, while at the same time they acknowledge the significance of myths, symbols and culture in social group formation.

Taking an ethno symbolist stance, I view that although there are no pure ethnic ties based on pure genetic association, ethnic sentiments arising from myths of a common and unique origin in time and place are significant in ethnic formation and sentiments. Moreover, in the case of Africa, and given the primacy of ethnic identities, countries are still grappling with forging nation-states and developing nationalistic sentiments based on shared citizenship. Considering the intensity of ethnic conflicts around the world, one cannot deny the power of perceptions and sentiments; it remains that ethnic communities believe that they share a common ancestry, heritage and history, and this is very powerful. It is with this understanding of ethnic formations as changing that I appropriated Mamdani's thesis of 'bifurcated state' and the role of colonialism and its modernist ideologies in forging modern African ethnicities, formations that within the wider context of the nation state are clearly political identities. In the following chapter, I delve deeper into issue of politicized ethnicity, the nexus between colonisation and ethnic violence, the African state and questions of legitimacy.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **Theorizing Ethnic Political Identity, Interethnic political Violence and Legitimacy in Africa**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Africa is a continent ravaged by conflict, civil strife and wars, emanating from the politicization of ethnicity; and subsequently, the ethnicisation of socio-political and economic processes. As such, the continent does not represent any significant level of social, economic and political progress five decades after most of its nation-states established independence from Western imperialists. Africa presents a contradictory picture of progress, very different to those in Asian countries like Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea and China who at independence were economically at par with most of the African countries (Asare and Wong 2004). This is despite the fact that Africa is endowed with enormous human and natural resources, with the latter estimated to be greater than that of almost any other continent in the world.

The problem it seems lies with the kind of narrow theoretical understanding of the continent that continues to inform development and political policies in African countries. This is true if indeed, we agree with Mamdani's sentiments that:

A curious feature of current African politics is the prescription of solutions drawn from a context other than the one that gave rise to its problems. Whereas the source of demands is the existing African context, the framework for solutions is generally a received theory of democracy which has little to do with contemporary realities in Africa (1992, p.2228).

In this Chapter, I try to locate the research problem within broader theoretical works on ethnic identity and citizenship in postcolonial African states. I look at the various theoretical perspectives on ethnic identity and try to situate politicized ethnicity and conflict in Africa through primordialist and instrumentalist views that so seem to inform the understanding of ethnicity in Africa. Here I also look at the various notions of ethnicity, ethnic competition and violence as a creation of the colonial state project particularly through the eyes of Fanon, Mamdani and Mbembe. I also try to understand unpack the relationship between ethnicity and

state legitimacy in most of the continents' nation-states, as well as analyse why politicized ethnicity poses significant challenge to the formation of the state through Predatory theory advanced by Tilly.

## **4.2 Ethnic Political Identity in Africa**

Weber (1921, p.389) defines ethnic groups as 'those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration . . . [and] it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists.' This emphasis on a common past is what gives an ethnic group its validity and what separates it from other kinds of groups. The past must be invoked because it helps to 'legitimize the present' (Isaacs 1975, p.118). As a result, most ethnic groups consciously elaborate and reemphasize certain historical events to remind members (as well as outsiders) of their common origins; one of the key points that Patterson (1983, p.31) makes, however, is that for many groups this belief in a common ancestry is often a myth 'that has little or no basis in fact'. This is not to suggest that ethnic groups do not exist or they are figments of our imagination. Rather this is to say that they are socially constructed, and it follows Stuart Hall's claim that '[a]ll human communities are socially constructed' (Hall 2003, p.136).

Hameso (1997) contests the idea of myth as a basis for ethnic formation. He questions the notion of 'false consciousness', which was often put forward by Marxist and leftist writers describing ethnicity, particular within the African context. Hameso poses the question, 'who is the arbiter in deciding what is a *universally true* and what is a *particularly false* consciousness in the suburban towns of Africa?' (1997, p.26). He further argues that 'if ethnicity is a 'false' consciousness, it is possible to take the argument further to its logical conclusion that ethnic groups or even racial groups are false groups. Yet history knows no such a group; for there is no false group' (1997, p.26). The logic he seems to stress is that if ethnic groups believe in their biological ties, then it is pointless to argue otherwise. In Kenya, there are numerous ethnic communities with an extensively long history such as the Luo, who belong to the wider community of the Jii-speakers: the Shilluk, Naath, Anuak, the Luo of Wau, the Acholi, Alur, Jonam, Jo Pa Luo, Pari, Langi, Labwor and Jo Padhola. They share a history which is 'at least four thousand years old' (Ogot 1996). Similarly, the Kikuyus seem to have a very deep sense of the past 'beginning five hundred

years ago, a primal time (*agu na agu*) when the eponymous founder *Ndemi na Mathathi* began making their own history. It was history rooted in custom and meant to validate the social model forever (*tene natene*)' (Kenyatta 1938).

This primordialist view explains persistent ethnic bonds as resulting from psychological and biological factors that, they believe, have fundamental significance in the formation of sense of belonging, in-group identity and solidarity among members of an ethnic group (Weber 1994). For Oommen (1997, p.37-38) '[t]hose who pursue this perspective see ethnicity as a latent phenomenon that exists everywhere which is invoked by deprived communities at an opportune moment when they experience erosion of existing privileged or employed to fight against longstanding denials of privileges'. The primordial viewpoint focuses on the strength of ethnic identity and claims a strong correlation between ethnic diversity and ethnic conflict. The hypothesis here is as follows: *The more ethnically heterogeneous a society, the higher the likelihood of extreme political violence* (Mousseau 2001).

If the above assumption is correct, then 1994 Rwanda genocide between only two major ethnic groups - the Tutsis and Hutus<sup>20</sup> would have been an unlikely occurrence. Tanzania being more ethnically heterogeneous than most politically volatile East African countries could have exploded into numerous ethnic conflicts<sup>21</sup>; so far, none has been recorded in that country. Sadly, it is this assumption of ethnic identity as primordial that informed colonial view on ethnicity in the late colonial period. Based on what had happened in Europe, the theory was that all people move from tradition to modernity in a unilinear, irreversible path, ethnicity was seen as a set of primordial beliefs growing out of the coincidental interaction of culture, political organization, language, and territory (Kasfir 1979). Modernization <sup>22</sup>was seen as the means by which to get

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<sup>20</sup> Twa is the third ethnic group but largely excluded from the political discourse of the Rwandan genocide.

<sup>21</sup> Although this has been attributed to a lack of ethnic majority; it may be argued that ethnic alliances can be used as has been done in Kenya to create numbers needed for political dominance.

<sup>22</sup> Although modernization is not synonymous to development, the modernization thinking itself is closely connected to the rise of development thinking and ideologies, based in the European 'civilization' notions of the enlightenment era of the 17th century (Power 2003). The modernization theory of the post-world war development age was advanced mainly by American scholars, prominently Talcot Parsons (Webster 1984, p.49). Parsons modernization theory points to the functional ability of institutions in a society to bring about harmony, desired change and transformation. In the Parsonian system, there are four functions that must be performed: the economy helps the society to adapt to the environment, the government helps the society to achieve its goals, the legal institutions such as the legislature and the judicial subsystems promote integration of all the different institutions. And lastly the family and education perform the role of ensuring values are maintained from generation to generation (Webster 1984)



rid of the primordial associations and forge new national identities. With regards to this, Pye (1966) writes:

The essence of nation-building in the new states is the search for a new sense of collective identity which will be built around a command of all the potentialities inherent in the universal and cosmopolitan culture of the modern world, and a full expression of self-respect for all that is distinctive in one's own heritage (quoted in Tilly 1991, p.569)

The thought was that through the education of an African in schools with Western curriculum, conversion to a Western religion, and changing of the production system from subsistence to commercialization of agricultural production and the subsequent rise of the cash crop sector and wage employment that they were believed to be shedding the trappings of tradition and embracing the modernization. The urbanization of African cities became the evidence of the modernity in Africa and was seen as representation of the shift, from tradition to modernity or as Tilly (2008) puts it, “detrribalization” (sic). Behind this point of view were three assumptions: ‘(i) that ethnicity was based on objective indicators (2) which produced values held deeply (3) primarily by the masses-that is, those who had not gained elite status by entering the colonial cash economy’ (Kasfir 1979, p.368), and by incorporating ethnic groups into the modernist economy, ethnicity would lose its significance.

Nagel argues that ‘ethnic identity is the result of a dialectical process involving internal and external opinions and processes, as well as the individual’s self-identification and outsiders’ ethnic designations- i.e., what you think your ethnicity is, versus what they think your ethnicity is’(1994, p.154). Nagel (1994) cautions, however, that limiting ethnic identity as simply a matter of personal choice runs the risk of emphasizing agency at the expense of structure. Nagel (1994) emphasises the fact that ethnic identity is both voluntary and obligatory because individual choices are actually bound by the available ethnic categories at a particular time and place. For example, in many African countries, people were labelled and forced into defined ethnic and racial categories through the arbitrary creation of geographical boundaries, and in some cases based on appearance or physical qualities. Thus, while an individual can choose from among a set of ethnic identities, that set is generally limited to socially and politically defined ethnic categories with varying degrees of stigma or advantage attached to them (Nagel 1994).

Indeed, understanding African political economy through the above raised points lead us to the conclusion that ethnicity in Africa is based on the rational calculation to employ identity for political and economic interests. This politicization of identity has its root in colonialism; it has found its accentuation in the post-colony<sup>23</sup>. Identity has always been the means to control and restrict access to resources. Fanon captures this incisively in his book *The wretched of the earth*, he writes:

The singularity of the colonial context lies in the fact that economic reality, inequality, and enormous disparities in lifestyles never manage to mask the human reality. Looking at the immediacies of the colonial context, it is clear that what divides this world is first and foremost what species, what race one belongs to. In the colonies the economic infrastructure is also a superstructure (1963, p.5).

At the turn of the 21st century, ethnicity is a vital force that shapes politics in the African continent. The modernization and development projects have certainly not led to the demise of ethnicity as was professed by ethnologists of the modernization and civilization school of thought. Neither has calling Africans loyalties to ethnic ties rather than class solidarity “backward and primitive” (a reference often made by the Western media and the intellectual community) led to its retreat (Hameso 1997). If anything, it is urbanization which is regarded as the substance of modernization that has in fact enhanced ethnicity and intensified it, because Africans maintain strong links with their rural communities and form ethnic organizations with kinsmen from their villages in urban areas. Most Kenyans, for example, maintain their homes in the villages; city homes are considered temporary homes; when Kenyans die in the urban area, their remains have to be transported and buried in the rural villages; retirement also normally means a return migration to the rural home, which is considered “the natural home”. Tipps discredits the logic of modernization by asserting:

*Modernization* can no longer be equated simply with the destruction of tradition, for the latter is not a prerequisite of modernization-since in many instances traditional institutions and values may facilitate rather than impede the social changes usually associated with modernization-nor is it in itself sufficient condition of modernization (1973,p.214).

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<sup>23</sup> Kenya and Tanzania are in fact both ethnically heterogeneous countries that present different ethnic patterns of political and economic relations. According to Gutiérrez-Romero (2010), countries with high ethnic diversity such as Tanzania have used the education system and redistribution of resources to develop a sense of national as opposed to ethnic identity. However, in other ethnically diverse countries, like Kenya, the political elite through political parties have used ethnic identity to mobilize voters and to establish political alliances, leading in some cases to violent ethnic conflicts. So, here we have a problem created by the colonial state, but which the African leaders in the post-colonial have made their political recourse.

Tipps (1994) further observes that colonial domination did not necessarily lead to modernization in terms of destroying cultural traits and traditions. Even education has not been a facilitator of social transformation in respect to ethnic identity; in fact, Africa presents a case where it's the educated, the urban elite who reinforce ethnicity, and that ethnic 'exclusiveness and discrimination is more pronounced among the elite' (Hameso 1997, p.24).

Ethnic consciousness in Africa cannot be condemned by modernization (Bayart 1993); this is because its complexity cannot simply be understood as the creation of the colonial state or the post-colonial. When the state and societies are governed by two conflicting ideologies 'amorality and morality, respectively, the only visible reality is that of dichotomy between ethnic groups and an equally binding identity is that of ethnicity' (Hameso 1997, p.26). Adding to this debate, Berman's injection is that 'writing the narrative of the colonial state revealed another missing element: culture'<sup>24</sup> (2004, p.17). He criticizes the Marxist, modernization and neoclassical growth theories for they tend to ignore the aspect of culture by assuming that a change of socioeconomic and political structures will automatically lead to a cultural change, but the reality is that 'Western forms of political and economic institutions, state and market, introduced into African societies rarely work the way they are supposed to in the West' (2004, p.17).

Mamdani raised another important critic on the relationship between ethnicity and political economy as historically constituted and institutionalised. For Mamdani, Marxist and nationalist theorists did not correctly capture the historical legacy of colonial structures, and the resulting contestations based on identity. This is because identity determines one's social position within the economic structures. Mamdani writes:

The tendency was to discuss agency in an institutional void, by focusing on how it was harnessed to the colonial project; Marxists called the agents "compradors" and nationalists called them "collaborators." Both bemoaned "tribe" and "tribalism" as colonial concoctions, while assuming "race" and "racism" to exist as something real, in a positivist sense. It was said that ethnicity was cultural and race biological. Neither Marxists nor nationalists tried to historicize race and ethnicity as political identities undergirded and reproduced by colonial institutions-perhaps because neither had yet managed sufficient analytical distance from that legacy. Because our emphasis on agency was to the exclusion of institutions, we failed to historicize agency, to understand the extent to which colonial institutions did shape the agency of the colonized (Mamdani 2001, p.652)

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<sup>24</sup> 'The context of meaning and social practice through which Africans encountered, interpreted, and responded to the institutional and cultural intrusions of colonialism and postcolonial "development"' (Berman 2004, p.17-18)

Indeed, in analysing Africa, one cannot escape the reality that class difference in itself is not a primary factor of social divisions and conflict. The reality is that a Marxist critique of political economy cannot offer a plausible account of the unique kind of social division and inequalities that we see in the continent. In Africa, economic inequalities are often horizontal in nature, in that perceived economic wellbeing is tied to ethnic or racial identity. There is not a uniform and united class that cut across ethnic grouping. This is a contradiction of Marx's observations in the *Communist Manifesto* that the development of the bourgeoisie and the world market; liberation of commerce and uniformity in the mode of production, would cause national difference and antagonisms between people to gradually disappear (1932, p.340). African societies lack clearly demarcated bourgeoisie and proletariat social stratification that Marx observed in industrializing European societies. This is because a major proportion of the African populace lives in rural communities where there is no clear organization between capital and labour (Ake 1967). Moreover, Africa presents a case where class is defined in terms of who has access to state opportunities and resources; thus, class is made tantamount to ethnicity, 'while in some cases in the West, individuals or families become members of a particular social class, in Africa there are times when entire clans, tribes or sub-nationalities enter a particular class level' (Mazrui and Tidy, quoted in Hameso 1997, p.26). Markakis (1996) has postulated that '[e]thnicity has long been one of the factors determining political choices in Africa; as it is, has (been) in many parts of the globe. Given the nature of African societies, it would have been strange indeed if this were not so' (quoted in Hameso 1997, p.93).

Instrumentalists, sharing in Marxist perspectives, hypothesize that shared class positions, particularly at the lower levels of the class hierarchy, overlap and reinforce cultural boundaries and that this serves to maintain ethnicity despite industrialization and the development of class cleavages (Hechter, 1975, also see Olzak, 1983; Young 1986). According to Kasfir, those who assess ethnicity from a Marxist mode of inquiry often argue that, it is economic relationships that carry critical political importance. This, he argues, emanates from the factors that shaped the colonial state; those that empowered those who acquired control over one or another aspect of the means of production to employ new forms of ethnicity as weapons to mystify peasants and workers. The assumption is that members of deprived classes who enter politics to pursue ethnic goals are the victims of 'false consciousness'. For Kasfir (1979, p.368)

At the root of this point of view are the three assumptions (i) that ethnicity of economic material relationships), (2) that its political uses can frequently be traced to members of the recently formed middle classes who (3) advocate ethnic demands as a consequence of their rational calculations in pursuit of desired resources.

However, Kasfir takes issue with the notion of 'false consciousness'; he argues, 'consciousness is still consciousness, whether or not the actor recognizes his "true" interests' (1979, p.369). He bases this argument on the observation that when a person's life is under political or economic threat due to ethnic exclusion it would be irrational to expect him to ignore ethnic considerations. To quote him again:

To dismiss all manifestations of politicized ethnicity as irrelevant is to ignore a range of motives many of which will, on empirical examination, turn out to be strongly felt. Even where ethnic symbols are merely the facade for economic grievances, they often structure the political situation and thus affect the outcome (1979, p.368-369).

Ethnicity is thus a political apparatus for economic competition in multi-ethnic states and has nothing to do with primordial instincts of hostility. Oommen (1997) injects in another dimension which gives flexibility to and captures the fluidity of ethnic identification and its rationalization for political or economic gains. For him, even when an ethnic identity is preferred, an individual may, within limits, change from one ethnic category to another. This choice is a political resource over which individuals have varying degrees of control (Oommen, 1997). A case in point is the adoption of a pre-colonial Nama ethnicity (a family of the KhoiKhoi group) by a group of people in the modern Western Cape in South Africa. The "re-emergence" of the Nama ethnicity symbolises an expression of positive self-description aimed at benefitting from the establishment of a national park on land in the Northern Richtersveld Reserve<sup>25</sup> (Sharp and Boonzaier 1994). The 1991 establishment of the park was marked by symbolic displays of Nama culture and cultural artefacts:

During the ceremony, outsiders who had been invited to witness the occasion were confronted with a range of clear symbols of Nama ethnicity - the presence of a Nama choir, the singing of Nama songs, the construction of a traditional Nama *matjieshuis* (mat house), and the staging of the marriage ritual for a Nama bride. These events were part of a programme of festivities designed by the local people themselves, and the symbols involved appeared to express the 'fact' of continuity between contemporary reserve-dwellers and the region's pre-colonial Khoikhoi inhabitants. The symbols gave, as the people of the reserve implied, a glimpse of their heritage,

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<sup>25</sup> The Northern Richtersveld is one of seven communal reserves in the Namaqualand district of the Northwest Cape (Sharp and Boonzaier 1994).

an indication of who they were, and an insight into the responsibility they believe they bear as intermediaries between past and future generations. (Sharp and Boonzaier 1994, p.406)

This is a common feature within the wider context of post-Apartheid South Africa. The fluidity of identity in South Africa, particularly within the non-white population is evident in instance of affirmative action based on race. For example, in their everyday life, Indian and Coloured<sup>26</sup> South Africans maintain their culturally symbolised racial identities as distinctly Indians or Coloureds respectively, but they also easily adopt a temporal “quasi-black” identity particularly when there are economic or political benefits – such as affirmative actions and BEE benefits tied to being “black”. Similarly, in Kenya, some members of other ethnic groups, particularly evident among the Kikuyu, will adopt a Maasai identity to benefit from the economic or material advantaged of being a Maasai;<sup>27</sup> this is particularly common in the tourism industry. Thus, it is quite possible for one to interpret one’s lineage and choose one’s ethnic identity. Marcel Rutten observes that almost all of the formal Maasai political elite ‘have mixed origins’, although ‘some are considered to belong more to the Maasai society than others’ (2001, p.43). George Saitoti, the late minister for internal security, is perhaps the most famous example. As noted by Africa Confidential, ‘Saitoti, now identified as a Maasai, started life as a Kikuyu and was known for years as George Kinuthia Muthengi’ (26 May 1995).

This is in line with Mahmoud’s (1992) sentiments that group awareness rather than clusters of cultural traits are the most important because the reality of ethnicity is determined largely by in- and out-group ethnic identifications. Identity, therefore, is not necessarily only about a spontaneous feeling that people have, but it is to a large extent about the position they have in society (Keller 1998). Ethnic identity permits fluidity and flexibility. In assessing the nature of communities in the Kenyan coast, Bayart (1993) points that the word Swahili was introduced by Arab traders to differentiate the inhabitants of the east coast the Kiswahili speakers, from the Zanj (Bantu) and that today being a Swahili largely depends on the circumstances of its expression. Bayart wrote,

For an Arab from Arabia or for someone from a tribe in the interior the Mswahili is someone who speaks Kiswahili as his mother tongue, who lives in the coast and is a Muslim. On the other hand, locally, in Lamu, Zanzibar or Mombasa, people use the word Swahili to denote a community,

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<sup>26</sup> Refers ‘to any person of “mixed-blood” and includes children as well as descendants from Black-White, Black-Asian, White-Asian, and Black-Coloured unions’ (Brown 2000, p.198)

<sup>27</sup> The Maasai attracts a lot attention and interest from Western tourists interested in cultural tourism in Kenya.

thus conferring a great sociological importance to the term. But except for the descendants of slaves or the detribalised Africans, Mswahili is never used as the only term of identification by the Waswahili themselves. In this way it is true that someone is Mswahili and also Mngwana, Hadrami or Sharifu: another could be a true Swahili but also the son of Pokomo parents (a tribe in the north-eastern of Kenya), Islamicised and living in Lamu (Bayart 1993, p.50).

Indeed, ethnicity is just one of the many possible identities that could become the motivation for political action (Kasfir 1997). People may be compelled to adopt or prefer a particular social identity (ethnic, class, religious, or a combination of these identities) due to present political conditions or as a consequence of historical developments. In this view, ethnic conflict in the contemporary African political economy is not ensuing from the politicization of primordial needs, but is a consequence of the mobilization of ethnic interests to gain access to social, political, and economic resources that emanates from the unbalanced structure of the colonial economy.

### **4.3 Colonisation and Interethnic Political Violence**

There is an intrinsic connection between racial prejudice, interethnic competition and violence. It is in the historical development of the Colonial state that Mamdani (2001b) traces the political violence that so characterizes the African continent particularly the Rwanda genocide. This political occurrence, he claims can only be likened to the Nazi Holocaust. Mamdani (2001b) points the Rwanda genocide, for example, has encountered three silences both from the academia and the crowds. The first, he claims, concerns the ‘history’ of genocide: the tendency to treat the Rwandan genocide as an isolated case with no connection to historical developments. He argues, ‘many write as if genocide has no history and as if the Rwandan genocide had no precedent, even in this century replete with political violence’ (Mamdani 2001b, p.7). The second silence has to do with the ‘agency’ (Mamdani 2001b, p.8) of the genocide: the tendency to analyse the genocide as solely resulting from state engineering through a top down design. Mamdani explains that ‘[w]hen political analysis presents the genocide as exclusively as state project and ignores its subaltern and “popular” character, it tends to reduce the violence to a set of meaningless outbursts, ritualistic and bizarre, like some ancient primordial twitch come to life’ (Mamdani 2001b, p.8). The third silence Mamdani points to is the ‘geography’ of the genocide, based on the fact that like in many African states because the conflict was internal, there is a tendency to reason that it must be resulted purely from processes that unfolded within the

boundaries of the polity, leading to a failure into inquiring about 'regional processes that fed the dynamic leading to the genocide' (2001b, p.8).

It is in seeking to deal with these limitations that Mamdani (2001b) explores the relationship between history and politics in Africa by problematizing the relationship between the historical legacy of colonialism and postcolonial history, geography, and politics. Mamdani (2001b) argues that the Rwandan genocide is not an isolated case in Africa and therefore needs to be thought through within the logic of colonialism. What he calls the 'genocide impulse': the first instance of genocide is the 'genocide of the native by the settler', and the second is the 'native impulse to eliminate the settler' (Mamdani 2001b, p.9-10). In many academic quotas there is a tendency to associate ethnic conflict with primordialist instincts or African barbarism. What is so clear is that Mamdani's (2001b) take on conflict and violence in Africa is analysed through the history of colonialism.

Achille Mbembe takes us to another dimension of the spectrum on conflict and violence in Africa. Mbembe (2002), in *African modes of self-writing*, suggest that it is the African refusal to be dehumanised that has forced them to constantly reaffirm their human identity; denied by the others, and used as the basis for permitting the extent and the kind of atrocious violence exercised on Africans through slavery, colonialism and Apartheid. Mbembe (2002) argues that Africans assertion 'we are human beings like any others' can be gauged only with respect to the violence of the denial that precedes it and makes it not only possible but necessary. Expressing a similar view, Bhaba (2004, p. xxxviii) in his foreword to Fanon 1963 postulates:

The colonised is made to feel inferior, but by no means convinced of his inferiority. The eruption of violence is a manifestation of this anxious act of masking, from which the colonized emerges as a guerrilla in camouflage waiting for the colonist to let down his guard so that he might jump; each obstacle encountered is a stimulant to action and a shield to hide the insurgents intention to take the colonist's place.

Mamdani and Mbembe borrow greatly from Fanon's views on political violence in Africa. The underlying thesis is that violence in the modern African state has strong links to and correlations to the colonial political economy. It was Frantz Fanon who highlighted the nexus of the violence in the postcolonial state to that of the colonial state; that is the violence of the colonised African on fellow African (anyone seen as a threat to his political and economic survival). The colonised (the African elite in the post-colony) rises to take on the position of power that which was



previously the position of the settler in the colonial state. Now in the post-colonial state, the colonised is out to eliminate any settler, foreigner, the other ethnic group(s) or race. This can be seen as a continuation of the impulse (Fanon 1966) that influences the mind of the colonised as a result of what he has gone through in the hands of the settler:

Exploitation, tortures, raids, racism, collective liquidations ... [all] make of the native an object in the hands of the occupying nation. This object man, without means of existing, without a *raison d'être*, is broken in the very depth of his substance. The desire to live, to become more and more indecisive, more and more phantom-like. It is at this stage that the well-known guilt complex appears (Fanon 1966, p. xxxvii)

Thus, the political reasoning is to eliminate the settler. Fanon writes:

The colonized subject discovers reality and transforms it through his praxis, his deployment of violence and his agenda for liberation... it is [t]he violence which governed the ordering of the colonial world which tirelessly punctuated the destruction of the indigenous social fabric, and demolished unchecked the systems of reference of the country's economy, lifestyles, and modes of dress. This same violence will be vindicated and appropriated when, taking history into their own hands, the colonized swarm into the forbidden cities (1966, p.5-6).

Following this line of thinking, with particular interest on the Rwanda genocide, Mamdani (2001b) argues that it is the Belgian reform of the colonial state in the decade from the mid-1920s to the mid-1930s that constructed Hutu as *indigenous* Bantu and Tutsi as *alien* Hamites, unlike in other African states where Africans were ethnicised and racialised, in Rwanda they were only racialised.

Political violence in Africa is thus enshrined in both moral and political dilemma. The Rwandan genocide demonstrates the impact of privileged ‘tribalisation’ of its political system. On 7 April 1994, Radio Television Libres Des Mille Collines (RTLM) is said to have aired a broadcast attributing the plane crash that led to the deaths of the Presidents of Burundi and Rwanda the day before to a rocket attack by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) and a contingent of UN soldiers. The discourse carried hidden incitements to eliminate the “Tutsi cockroach”. In a space of only 100 days an estimated 800,000 Rwandans were killed, this genocide like many politicised ethnic conflicts in Africa had its foundation in the structure of the colonial state. There is nothing primordial about the genocide, the two ethnic groups are culturally very similar in terms of language and traditions, the Tutsis are often said to be taller and thinner than Hutus, with some saying their origins lie in Ethiopia (Mamdani 2001b,p44-46) . During the genocide, the bodies of

Tutsis were thrown into rivers, with their killers saying they were being sent back to Ethiopia (BBC News Africa 2011). What is more startling is the fact that it is the Belgians who produced identity cards classifying people according to race, with Tutsi's being accorded a higher racial status than the Hutus (Mamdani 2001b, BBC News Africa 2011). The Belgians privileged Tutsis with better jobs and educational opportunities than their Hutu counterparts. The logic of genocide would then have: if the white foreigner had been eliminated, it was now time to get rid of the black foreigner, the unwanted encroacher - "the cockroach". If we agree with Mamdani (2001b), the 1994 Rwanda genocide was in fact a culmination of a build-up of resentment towards the Tutsis that began in the colonial era. In the aftermath of the genocide, most of the deceased were Tutsis - and most of those who had committed the atrocities were Hutus.

Similar events marked the 2008 post-election violence in Kenya. An article by the New York Times, Feb. 15, titled "*Signs in Kenya of a Land Redrawn by Ethnicity*" read:

Ever since a deeply flawed election in December kicked off a wave of ethnic and political violence, hundreds of thousands of people have been violently driven from their homes and many are now resettling in ethnically homogenous zones. Luos have gone back to Luo land, Kikuyus to Kikuyu land, Kambas to Kamba land and Kisiis to Kisii land. Even some of the packed slums in the capital, Nairobi, have split along ethnic lines.

Violence is clearly the avenue of self-determination in most African states. Kasfir (1983) points to the political culture born out of colonialism based on the belief that the authoritarianism was the proper approach of control because political activity represented a concealed form of self-interest that contradicted public welfare. To elaborate on the nexus between colonial despotism and the atrocity of violent conflicts in Africa, I quote Fanon (1966, p. 44) and his view on the logic of atrocity:

For the colonized, this violence represents the absolute praxis. Militant therefore is one who works. The questions the organization asks the militant bear the mark of this vision of things: "Where have you worked? With whom? What have you accomplished?" The group requires each individual to have performed an irreversible act. In Algeria, for example, where almost all the men who called on the people to join the national struggle were sentenced to death or wanted by the French police, trust was proportional to the desperate nature of each case. A new militant could be trusted only when he could no longer return to the colonial system. Such a mechanism apparently existed in Kenya with the Mau-Mau, who required every member of the group to strike the victim. Everyone was therefore personally responsible for the death of the victim. To work means to work towards the death of the colonist. Claiming responsibility for the violence also allows those members of the group who have strayed or have been outlawed to come back,

to retake their place and be reintegrated. Violence can thus be understood to be the perfect mediation. The colonized man liberates himself in and through violence.

Indeed, in most conflicts in Africa, those recruited to fight including child soldiers are often forced to kill close relatives or clansmen so brutally to discourage the abandonment of the cause of the militia or rebel groups. Mbembe (2002) is, however, cautious about this analysis of the African condition through the prism of *victimhood* because such philosophies exonerate African leaders and people from taking responsibility over the present deplorable conditions in the continent, and the destiny of the continent. Ideologies that emphasise that the problems of the continent are proceeding not arising from autonomous choices but from the legacy of a history imposed upon Africans ‘burned into their flesh by rape, brutality, and all sorts of economic conditionalities’, Mbembe (2002, p.244) argues. For him, this leads to the choice of violence as the only appropriate channel of self-determination, ‘the fetishisation of state power; the disqualification of the model of liberal democracy; and the populist and authoritarian dream of a mass society’ (2002, p.244). Despite his apprehensions, Mbembe (2002) does acknowledge the mental impact colonization has had on Africans.

For Mbembe, colonization was a co-invention - involving both the settler and the native, shaped through Western violence but also managed by African auxiliaries seeking profit. Indeed, Mbembe takes this to another level, and he writes ‘[a]s a refracted and endlessly reconstituted fabric of fictions, colonialism generated mutual utopias—hallucinations shared by the colonizers and the colonized’ (Mbembe (2002, p.263). A closer look at the colonial political economy exemplifies this. Owing to shortages in the colonial human resource, colonial powers generally got blacks to colonize their own kinsmen. This special group of Africans was dubbed the metropolitan population with privileges above fellow natives. Colonialists employed a minimal staff of Europeans with a larger proportion of Africans managing the machinery of the colonial state at the lower level positions (Blanton, 2001). Confirming his claim with statistics, Blanton *et al* (2001, p.477) highlight that ‘Nigeria had only one British administrator for every 100,000 Africans, with a colonial army of 4,000, only 75 of whom were not Africans.’ And so he concludes ‘[i]t must be recognized that colonialism exercised a strong seductive power over Africans on a mental and moral no less than material level’ (2001, p.477) through promises of inclusion and progress in the colonial polity.

If we agree with Fanon (1966), Mamdani (2001b) and Mbembe (2002), then it should not come as a surprise that certain ethnic groups in Africa feel more entitled to subjugate and rule over other ethnic groups. Those who worked with the Europeans to oppress fellow Africans feel that they inherited the position of power when the settler left, and those who fought against colonialism (those underprivileged in the colonial state) feel they suffered and risked their lives to free the land from the enemy (settler) and are thus entitled to the land, its resources and power. In fact, such were the sentiments arising between the Luos and Kikuyus during the 2008 post-election violence in Kenya, as narrated by Rao, a Luo who had to run for safety after the following threat was circulated via pamphlets by Kikuyus:

It is a mockery of justice for the Luos to continue eating minced meat and driving big cars in Kijabe while our brothers and sisters are living in the cold in Maimahiu, Limuru, Eldoret and Nakuru. 300,000 Kikuyus are living like refugees in their own country having been reduced to paupers. 460 have died. We shall not be killed during the Mau Mau<sup>28</sup> and be killed today by uncircumcised beings. We swear by the sacred Mugumo tree that when we descend upon Kijabe, we shall not leave any Luo alive..... (Rao January 9, 2008 quoted in Roberts 2009)

The above quote shows that it is the inability to transcend the politicized ethnic and racial identities in Africa that poses great challenges to reconstitution of citizenship in the postcolonial state. The state in Africa in many ways lacks legitimacy. This lies in the inability of the ruling class who inherited the state from its former colonizers to shape the society, on the basis of collective nationalism and citizenship. It has been clearly observed that rulers reinforced their power by resorting to neo-patrimonial policies that enhanced their personal power through corruption, nepotism, and clientelism at the expense of weakening state institution; the state often lacked legitimacy from the beginning (Thies 2007), a theme which the following section discusses.

#### **4.4 The African State and Questions of Legitimacy**

The African continent remains home to numerous weak shadow states characterised by ethnic fragmentation and failed states. The persistence of ethno-territorial divisions within most African polities continues to impede the establishment of stable nations-states. Central to this state of affairs is the question of legitimacy.

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<sup>28</sup> A militant African nationalist movement, active in Kenya: 1952-1960. Its main objective was to remove British rule and European settlers.

Analysing state formation process in Africa through the prism of Predatory Theory of Charles Tilly, inferred from studies of the development of stable states in Europe, exposes both ideological and structural contradictions of those that informed the development of colonial and the postcolonial states in Africa. Predatory theory rests on the argument that ‘good wars make strong states stronger and bad wars make weak states weaker.’ If the state ceases to extract revenue, then it ceases to exist. Since tax collection is a product of policymaking, the administration of law, the monitoring of economic activity for compliance, and judicial and other means of enforcement, it becomes a useful gauge to assess the ongoing project of constructing the modern state. According to Tilly (1985, p.182), rulers engage in four main activities in the state-building process. First, they eliminate or neutralize their own rivals outside of the territory they are trying to control through war making. Second, they get rid of internal enemies or pacify rivals to their rule from within their territorial base through state making. Third, they protect those parties within their territorial base that support their continued rule. Finally, they extract resources from the population and territory they are attempting to control in order to accomplish the first three activities. By increasing the political tolerance of citizens for taxation, increasing incentives for the owners of capital to submit to higher levels of taxation to protect their assets and benefit from government wartime spending, the state is legitimized. The effectiveness of this extraction is based on the state’s aptitude to bargain with its own internal rivals for revenue in exchange for protection from external rivals. The state must therefore be seen as ‘relatively autonomous’ with regard to the dominant class forces, at least at the level of political practice (Lonsdale and Berman 1979, p. 489). In order to maintain its own legitimacy through the morality of class domination, the state must be seen to act on behalf of the social order as a whole. Indeed, it may have to act against the perceived interests of particular segments of the dominant class in order to renovate the structures and ideology of domination and accumulation (Lonsdale and Berman 1979, p.489).

Looking at the structure of the colonial state, it is evident that it grappled with the ‘contradictions between accumulation and legitimacy’ and maintaining state autonomy (Berman 2004, p.22). In Establishing the African state, there was never really a considerable external threat that and the colonial administrators focused on establishing order within their territories. This was achieved through a divisive indirect rule that relied on a large African population of local African authorities (chiefs, African elites and a developing petty bourgeoisie) who were rewarded by

decentralized channels of clientelist access to state resources (Berman, 2004, p.24). This in effect meant that colonial administrators become patrons to their African client/collaborators and made patron-client relationships, while at the same time undermining the universalistic relations of state and market, while the latter increasingly materialized patron-client exchanges (Berman 2004, p.24).

Using Tilly's analysis, we can postulate that one of the reasons for the relatively weak states in Sub-Saharan Africa is the lack of external threats within the continent. Bates (2001, p.75) argues that inability of the African state to establish itself as a legitimate autonomous body emanates from its failure to effectively engage in war making, state making, protection, or extraction. Neither the colonial state nor the post-colonial state has been able to establish a common political and socio-political ground for all its citizens. The state is never autonomous but is seen as 'ethnic entity'. Unlike European states and national boundaries that were shaped through wars, Africa did not undergo a substantial process of interstate wars to redraw national boundaries through war and conquest; perhaps, these have prevented African states from developing "nations" to replace competing ethnic associations. Herbst (1990, p.132) observes that the absence of war made it nearly impossible for states to alter their systems of taxation, such that groups advantaged by the tax system at independence are still favoured by it today. Even without the rule established by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963 to acknowledged all inherited colonial boundaries as legitimate (Herbst 1990,), interstate wars among African states was highly unlikely especially after colonisation. In addition, African political elites that control the states did not eliminate the internal threats (ethnic associations), but instead used them, at some level, to mobilize support for political positions and jostling. Clearly, upon independence, most of the populace in African states turned their allegiances to the associations they knew best, kinship networks, rather than the newly formed state. It remains that many African states are plagued by a lack of distinction between the public and private realms. Corrupt leaders consider the state assets as the source of their personal wealth and accumulation (Kasfir 1983).

Thies (2007) argues that although the state in Africa is able to prey upon society for revenue to sustain it, in most cases, the bargains struck between the ruler and the ruled for that revenue are of a different nature than found in Europe. The bargain forged between the African political

rulers and the masses is often of patron-client networks, that almost signifies multiple ethnic nations within a nation state. The state is not autonomous and strong enough to ever completely neutralize internal threat. Just as Kasfir (1983) indicates that opposition in such state did not arise as particular contestations over certain state policies, but arose to challenge the government itself or the very existence of the state. Similarly, the existence of external rivalries for the state in Africa has only served as a symbolic threat that the state can manipulate to continue its “protection racket”; that African states have not faced real external threats to become state as total war did in Europe. In the above formulation, without war, there is little chance for the forging of a “nation,” nor the mobilization and reorganization of the state-society relationship that ultimately led to representative government, the rule of law, investments in infrastructure that stimulate economic development, and so on (Thies 2007, p.720).

Furthermore, the difficulty in state formation hinders the formation of a nation-state in its true sense. Although there have been contestations as to whether it is the existence of a nation that precedes to the creation of a state or vice versa, either way we know that one does not often exist without the other (See McCrone 1998). Further, McCrone (1998) observes that the nation-state is not a hegemonic political form in itself, but that it is the ideology of the nation-state which is hegemonic. Held suggests that ‘all modern states are nation-states – political apparatuses, distinct from both the rulers and ruled, with supreme jurisdiction over a demarcated territorial area, backed by a claim to a monopoly of coercive power, and enjoying a minimum level of support or loyalty from their citizens’ (quoted in McCrone 1998,p.86). Yet we see a total contrast in Africa where it is the ideology of the ethnic group that is hegemonic over the ideology of the nation state. In many ways, African nation-states are comprised of various smaller political nations (ethnic groups) with their own politically demarcated and recognised even institutionalised territories competing for authority over the larger nation-state. As we have seen in many parts of the continent, the nation-state often cannot exercise control over all the citizens because it only receives loyalty from members of certain ethnic groups allied to the political elite controlling the state. This would explain the challenges and illegitimacy of the nation-state in Africa.

Because the nation-state in Africa lacks legitimacy, attaining democratization of political and economic processes has proven to be been an enormous challenge. Looking at the prospects of democratization in Africa, Decalo 1992 argues that Africa presents a condition that supports

Tilly's thesis '*why Europe will not occur again*'. Did African leadership in the immediate postcolonial state know something that the rest of the world was not aware of? Most African leaders like Moi defended single party rule on the rationale that competitive politics was not only going to be arduous in terms of the limited resources in developing countries, but was also going to mirror and politicize existing social ethnic and religious cleavages. Indeed, ethnicity had emerged as a threat to the democratization project. The dilemma, it seems, is that of successfully integrating two political systems clearly principled in two different ideologies and modes of operation; in the realms of the nation-state and ethnic community. Gurr (1993) voices similar views that democratization brings plentiful opportunities for ethnic mobilization; African rulers often incorporate ethnic groups into their patronage networks through ethnic intermediaries, or the ethno-regional elite. Since African ethnicity is a political, and not a cultural phenomenon representing some primordial identity, the state often is able to define ethnicity as well as set the stage for competition between ethnic groups. Huntington (1997) also makes similar observations that the process of democratization reinforces ethnic politics and conflict because the introduction of democratic processes in ethnicised states tends to produce political participation and competition along ethnic lines which are driven by communal political agendas.

It has often been argued that higher levels of economic development are mostly linked to lower levels of violence across nations. This has been the experience in many affluent and developed nations in the West, and perhaps informed the modernization and development projects in Africa. However, as studies show, this may not be always true in ethnically heterogeneous societies. Mousseau (2001), making reference to other authors, points out that resource mobilization, ethnic competition, and split labour-market theories postulate that development makes available the resources to be used for group mobilization; this, in turn, creates more issues over which to compete, increasing the areas for group interactions and conflict. Given the supremacy of ethnic ideologies that govern most African regimes, many African states are unable to accommodate increased demands for political participation and more equal competition and distribution of the national state resources. Chazan (1992) maintains that with state agencies unable or unwilling to assume responsibility for the welfare of their citizens, individuals and groups had to devise methods of fending for themselves in conditions of growing impoverishment. It is under this condition that ethnic patron-client networks that have emerged as a distinct character of the political economy in Africa.



## 4.5 Conclusion

The persistence of politicised ethnicity in most African states hinder the development of nationalistic ideologies that can foster the legitimacy of the nation-state, the democratization of political and economic processes and development of politically and economically stable African polities. Ethnicity in Africa is a political creation, forged and reinforced through the divisive and despotic mechanisms of the colonial political economy. Contemporary ethnic “dissimilarities” has however found their major stimulus from the introduction of competitive politics, and perhaps one can say found salience in the electoral democracy. Most African leaders and politicians are not willing to let go of playing the “ethnic card” for gains in their political pursuits. It is evident that politicization of ethnicity continues to be perpetuated by incumbent African leaders who are not willing to see change. They often do not demonstrate an aspiration to develop political and economic systems, policies and mechanisms that can adequately address the realities of the continent.

To external agencies involved in African affairs in one way or another, it is prudent to point that, Africa cannot be adequately understood without delving into its unique history; that is the development of its political systems and economic structures. The frequency and intensity of violence in the continent calls for digging deeper into the relationship between the historical legacy of colonialism and postcolonial history, geography, and politics. Following Berman (1998, p.306), we can confidently say that that the salience of ethnicity and the persistence of African communal solidarities cannot adequately be understood by theories preoccupied with the reproduction of the modernist paradigms of state and society; that is those tenets that are busy with analysis that lean towards what Africa is not in comparison to the West, rather than explaining what Africa is.

It is time to reconsider the apparent preoccupation with the principles of modernization theory, at least in the case of Africa, because it has not addressed the question ethnicity; but, rather, in most instances, it has exacerbated it. The modernization project enveloped within narratives that perceive ethnicity in Africa as a cultural phenomenon as opposed to a political product - informed the colonial state and lately adopted by World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) with the aim of reproducing the development path of Europe in Africa; and this has

simply intensified ethnic competition. These ideologies engrossed with the reproduction of 'one size fits all' idealized models of 'liberal democracy, the market and civil society' have simply been, as Berman (1998, p.307) argues, the 'object and purpose of analysis rather than its tool'. It is, therefore, vital here to understand African political problems through historical lenses. That is, focusing on the cultural logic of African politics, but without falling into narrowly idealist or culturalist' explanations, and stresses instead the linkage between cultural and cognitive factors and material political and economic forces (Berman 1998, p.306-308). Here, we also note that political problems in the African state cannot simply be understood as emanating from political currents within the state but derive in scope and structure from regional associations and external bodies such as the OAU (and its contemporary AU), IMF the World Bank and the United Nations, for these are the forces that have taken a prefectoral role in solving the 'African condition' of poverty, wars and ethnic violence through dogma and loaning resources. They, at times, even with good intentions, have been the perpetrators of problems in Africa due to their limited understanding of the historical occurrences that fed into the shaping of present political currents in most of Africa.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Looking Backward and Looking Forward: Problematics of Ethnic Political Identity in Kenya

*A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots. Marcus Garvey*

#### 5.1 Introduction

My starting point here is that despite the development of a significant pool of African historical research, done particularly in the post-colonial era and which has brought a much-needed shift in understanding both pre-colonial and colonial societies in Africa. This has not been adequately integrated in the various versions of modernization theory and liberal democracy theories that inform economic and political development in Africa (Berman 1998). Africa continues to be understood through flawed assumptions about ‘traditional society’ and misapprehensions of the ‘colonial legacy’ (Berman 1998). African history is indeed not limited to slave trade and colonialism. Africa had history and political entities that predates contact with the Western world. Skewed perception of Africans, and continued misinterpretation of the continent contribute significantly to the numerous political problems in the continent including that of ethnicity. British imperialism as an entity was grossly informed by a very limited intellectual understanding of the African people and the continent. For example, Montesquieu wrote the following about African people:

Most of the people on the coast of African continent are savage and barbarian, they are lazy, they have no skills, they have an abundance of precious metals which they take straight from nature. All civilized peoples therefore are in a position to trade with them to their advantage. They can get them to value many things which are of no value, and get a very high price for them (quoted in Bayart 1993, p.2).

British imperialists doubted if Africa had history before the coming of the Asian and European traders (Bayart 1993). How could Africans have history, considering that Africans were perceived through the prisms of enlightenment thoughts of Hegel and Kant who doubted if Africans were part of the human society? As Mbembe highlights, they ‘identified in the African sign something unique and even indelible that separated it from all other human signs’ (2002, p.246). This twisted diagnosis of the African continent and its people not only justified colonial

imperialism in the name of “civilization”, but also explains the continued misinterpretation of the political and economic challenges in the continent. Sadly, this misconstrued reading of and attitude towards the African continent and its people continues to serve as an alibi for many Africans (Bayart 1993).

Analysts of political formations and the ensuing problems have failed to approach them as historically and culturally specific to the diverse countries in Africa; often the continent is treated as a homogeneous unit. There has also been a failure to acknowledge regional disparities even with national political boundaries. It has been postulated that in seeking to understand the African political economy that is in addressing the question, what kinds of relations underlie the reproduction of crisis? The tendency has been either to highlight agency or structure (Mamdani 2001). Mamdani sees the ontological assumption of structure or agency as the essence of the crisis as limited and thus seeks to ‘join the two ends of this swing through a reflection on contemporary political developments that links agency to structure’ (Mamdani 2002, p. 493). Fairclough takes a similar stance as Mamdani on the interaction of agency and structure by contending that social events are set up through the intersection of two causal powers – those of social practices & social structures, and those of social agents – he argues that the seeming ability of social agents to produce certain predictable social events are influenced by social structures and practices (2012, p.456-457).

With regards to historical context of political formations and problems, Ngugi wa Thiong’o (1989) suggests a reinterpretation of Kenya’s history, claiming that Kenya’s history has been distorted by colonial writers and by Kenyan historians trained in Western critical modes of thought. A particular interpretation of history is enhanced or limited by a theoretical perspective that one chooses to apply (Ogude 1997). At times, there is a tendency to identify ethnic identities in Kenya as ‘primordial’. In rejection of this primordial view that there is naturalized identity (a point I already broadly made in the previous chapters), my intention is to appraise that argument that colonial practices have managed to accentuate, and, at times, “invent”, ethnic identities (Mamdani, 2002). Here, I look at the origins of polarized ethnic identity and ethnicity in Kenya by interrogating the development and the structures of the political economy of the colonial state in Kenya. Using Mamdani I argues that the creation of the ‘bifurcated state’ institutionalized

ethnicity. I also highlight how ethnicity continues to be an important determinant in the distribution of state resources and employment opportunities in Kenya's political economy.

## **5.2 The Roots of Polarized Ethnic Identities and Ethnicities in Kenya**

Pre-colonial Kenya<sup>29</sup> was comprised of culturally “distinct” ethnic groups, with their supposed unique myths of ancestry, custom, tradition, and political organization. These are different in function and scope from the modern ethnicities in Kenya. Pre-colonial African societies were stateless insofar as the concept of modern state is concerned. Modern states, which came into existence after the Peace of Westphalia of 1648<sup>30</sup>, are defined as entities having the sovereign authority to rule over the people of a specific territory. ‘Sovereignty gives such states the highest authority internally, and inviolability of their borders vis-à-vis external political actors’ (Paglia 2008, p.20). Contrastingly, ethnic groups in pre-colonial Kenya, as in many African societies, were mainly organized in feudal systems with a chief or king, and with largely decentralized administrative powers. But given centuries of inter-communal mingling through intermarriage and absorption it is no longer plausible to think of ethnic groups as pure biologically connected groups. Primordialist Kin selection theory put forward by Pierre van den Berge (1994) cannot adequately explain the political nature of modern ethnicities. Kasfir (1979, p.367) writes:

Anyone wishing to discuss ethnicity as a political variable has to consider the following questions: (1) Is ethnicity to be regarded as a characteristic of the mental state of the political actor or of the social milieu in which he lives? (2) Are the advocates of ethnicity those of high position within society, or those without power, wealth, or status? (3) Is the decision to act on ethnic motives based on rational calculation or deeply held values?

With this understanding, Fearon (2004) argues that ‘ethnicity is socially relevant when people notice and condition their actions on ethnic distinctions in everyday life. Ethnicity is politicized when political coalitions are organized along ethnic lines, or when access to political or economic benefits depends on ethnicity’ (Fearon 2004, p.2). The structuring of modern African politics along ethnic identities did not exist a century ago. This emanates from the colonialists’ need to maintain a prefectoral status over their colonies (Bayart, 1993). Imperialists used ethnic

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<sup>29</sup> Colonial rule in Kenya lasted from 1885-1963.

<sup>30</sup> A series of peace treaties signed between May and October 1648 in Osnabrück and Münster. These treaties ended the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) in the Holy Roman Empire, and the Eighty Years' War (1568–1648) between Spain and the Dutch Republic, with Spain formally recognizing the independence of the Dutch Republic (Sonnino 2008).

lines to 'organize and order reality by use of coercion, an authoritarian policy of forced settlement, by controlling migration movements, by more or less artificially fixing ethnic details through birth certificates and identity cards' (Bayart 1993, p.3). If indeed there is a relationship between the colonial administrative practices and ethnic group formation in Kenya, then an analysis of the relationship of colonialism and ethnicity is relevant in understanding the phenomena of internal conflicts in Kenya.

Here are two important contradictory junctures worth noting in Kenya's history. First, as Mamdani (1996a, 1996b, and 2001a) demonstrates, ethnicity in the continent was forged and crystallized as a colonial practice. Second, the state formation is also a colonial project, which placed itself in opposition to or against ethnic formation the colonial project affirmed. My discussion on the roots of ethnic polarization in Kenya would focus on these two viewpoints. It is here we find what Mamdani (1996a) called the formation of 'bifurcated' state in Africa, which is in contradiction within itself, and became a source of tension and shortcomings. As Mamdani (1984) also reiterates, what are termed tribes in Africa today are really nationalities, so formed by the advent of colonial rule. In the colonial 'bifurcated state', the ethnicity of a person was conferred and institutionalised as being white or a native, and through similar practices the colonial boundaries ended up grouping different communities of the 'natives' into ethnic groups. Mamdani (2001a) asks the following fundamental questions: What is the difference in law between a race and an ethnicity? Is it the difference between biology and culture, between biological race and cultural ethnicity?' and he answers, 'Not really'! Mamdani argues that a proper observation of the colonial institutions reveals that in the colonial state only natives were said to belong to ethnic groups; non-natives had no ethnicity and were thus identified racially. In many African countries, there was a racial hierarchy with whites (colons) at the top, followed by Coloureds (in some countries referred to as mixed), then Asians, then Arabs, and then Africans at the bottom identified as ethnic groups; the Kikuyus, the Zulus and the Tutsi (Mamdani, 2001a, p.654). And so the African people began to see themselves in ethnic terms. 'Everywhere the local apparatus of the colonial state was organized either ethnically or on a religious basis' (Mamdani, 1996b, p.147), and out of this the ethnicised African is formed and fixed.

Similarly, Berman (1998, p.311) argues that '[t]he modern ethnicities of Africa originate in the colonial period, however, and they are both clearly derived from the character of pre-colonial

societies and profoundly influenced in form, scope and content by the social, economic, cultural and political forces of colonialism'. Berman (1998) takes this a bit further and he suggests that ethnicity in the African continent was constructed rather by concocting of tradition and identity from a variety of cultural materials. In principle, Berman (1998) sees ethnicity as a product of self-interested interpretations of the past responding to the intrusion and challenge of colonialism. In spite of the fact that there was a significant continuity between pre-colonial and colonial processes of ethnic construction, colonial constructions of ethnicity were distinctive in that they were based on the role played by colonial chiefs and headmen and by an educated, literate intelligentsia and their apparent role in the process of ethnic imagining. Berman (1998, p. 317) writes,

The chiefs embodied the principle of 'tribe' as the basis of social organization, custom as the basis of individual behaviour, and the maintenance of what administrators regarded as pre-colonial ethnic identities.

Following Berman (1998) and Mamdani (1984, 1996a, 1996b and 2001a), I argue that the social construction of Kenyan ethnicity is rooted in the structural characteristics of the colonial state; a machinery of 'authoritarian bureaucratic control', and of the 'colonial political economy', based on Kenyan cash-crops and wage labour in capitalist commodity and labour markets. This fundamentally, as Berman (1998) would put it, even if partially, distorted the 'structural and spatial' organization of Kenyan society. British colonialism in general not only denied that African tribes are nations, dismissing them as peoples without history, but artificially and mechanically joined several of them into one administrative and political unit something that has continued to spew havoc in the post-colonial African states like Kenya (Oommen 1997, p.150). Oommen's (1997) argument is that the aggregation of tribes into one administrative unit is not going to make a nation; therefore, Kenya is not a nation in the sense that there are "English", "Welsh" or "French" (. African states are multinational or multi-tribal. Hameso (1997, p. 9) claims 'what is called tribalism in Africa is often genuine nationalism; the real nations of Africa are the Igbo, the Kikuyu and the Ewe, not Nigeria, Kenya and Togo'. If this claim is true, then we have no states in Africa, but merely struggling to forge them out of different formations. Perhaps the way forward to creating stability and ensuring democratization is to via ethnic federalism which Ethiopia somehow seems to have instituted.

Either way, the reality is that state formation becomes a sustained challenge to Kenya, a challenge to consolidate the different formations into one. What complicates Kenya's challenge is the hierarchical power relations formed and inequalities created across ethnic groups through colonial powers' practices. Alonso (1994, p.391) notes, 'state formation creates categories of 'self' and 'other' within a polity, and that ethnicity as a state project of state formation produces hierarchized forms of 'imagined people-hood' that are given varying degrees of social esteem and different privileges and prerogatives within a political community'.

### **5.3 The Colonial Creation of Kenya's Political Economy**

The creation of Kenya's geopolitical boundary, including the naming of the nation was a colonial affair, characterised by an ideology of white supremacy in which colonial administrators and settlers<sup>31</sup> enjoyed political and economic advantages over the majority black African population. The British divided the Kenyan territory along ethnic lines into eight provinces, creating a different majority in each; each province was subdivided into districts, often according to ethnic groups and subgroups. For example, the Luo are based mainly in Nyanza (though it is also the home to the Kisii, who have their own district); the Luhya, in Western Province; the Kikuyu, in Central Province; the Somali, in North-Eastern Province; and the Mijikenda, in the Coastal Province. The Rift Valley is dominated by the Kalenjin, but also contains Maasai, Turkana and Samburu districts. The Kamba share Eastern Province with Embu and Meru, among others. Nairobi is the most cosmopolitan province, with the Kikuyu forming a plurality (Brown in Sriran *et al* 2003).

For Berman (1998), this finds its origin in the colonialists (perhaps also combined with modernists) impulse to maintain social order. According to Berman, the colonial officials believed that 'every African belonged to a tribe, just as every European belonged to a nation, and they believed they confronted 'an Africa comprised of neatly bounded, homogeneous tribe'' (1998, p.320). Welsh (1996, p.479) maintains a similar view, and points out 'where colonized societies had known no indigenous chieftainship, such as the Kikuyu, the British, believing that all African peoples must have chiefs, created chiefs and endowed them with minor bureaucratic

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<sup>31</sup> British settlers move into the Kenyan highlands in the early 1900s, the population of white settlers was roughly about 66000 during the colonial period (Mosley 1983, p. 7).



function'. It is for this reason, that ethnicity is fixed in the African practice and time. The following quote captured this more aptly:

Men came to think of themselves as belonging to particular ethnic groups ... not because being a member of the group made them feel good, but also because the ethnic apparatus of the rural area-the chiefs,' traditional' courts, petty bourgeois intellectuals, and the systematized 'traditional' values of the 'tribe' as embodied in the ethnic ideology - all worked to preserve the very substantial interests which these men had in their home areas. (Leroy Vail 1989,p.15)

### Map of Kenya Showing Ethnically Partitioned Administrative Provinces

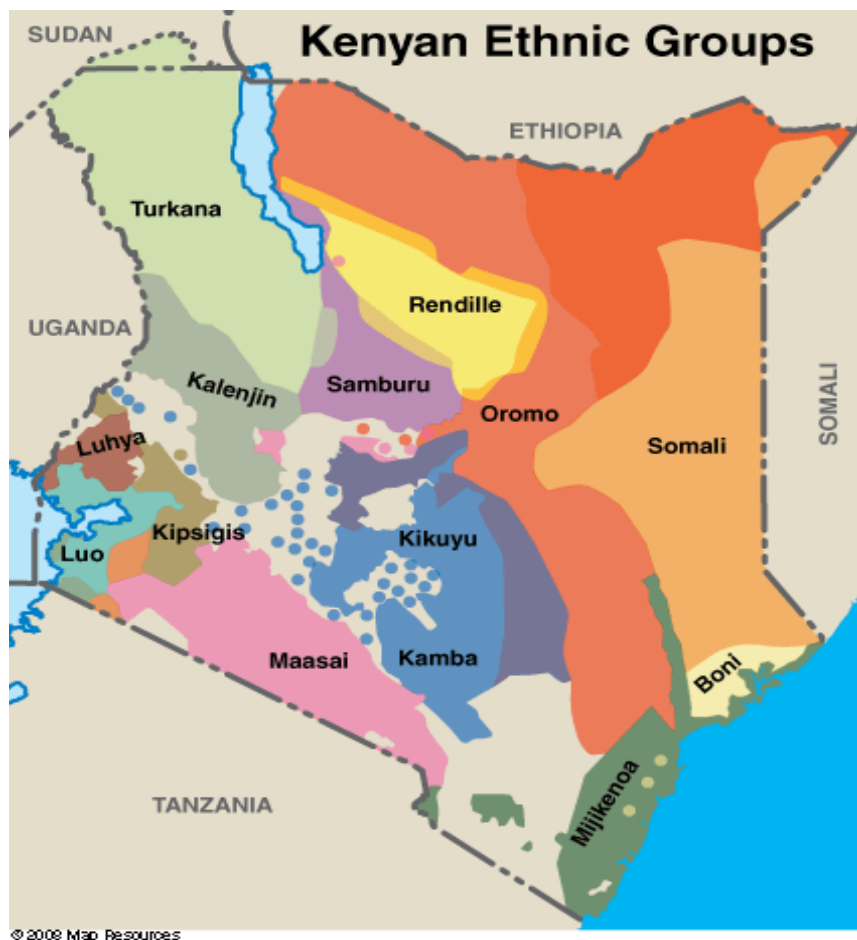


Source: [www.maps of the world .com](http://www.maps of the world .com)

In the colonial state, Central Kenya, the 'homeland' of the Kikuyu, became the 'heartland' of the colonist economy, while Nyanza, the Luo homeland, served as a labour reserve that supplied both unskilled and skilled labour to the centers of colonial capitalism (Kwaja 2009, p.40). In analysing the asymmetric economic participation in the colonial state, we see that the Luo conserved their relative autonomy from the state during the colonial period. Seen as a backward

subsistence peasant economy that seasonally produced for domestic consumption with the occasional surplus for the market, Luo's participation in the wider political economy was as manual labourers, categorised and labelled "Kavirondo labour" at the workplaces in the settler plantations and in the Mombasa dockyards' (Mamdani 1991a, p.91). In the Central and South Kavirondo reserves the Luo constituted a 'tribe' with an autonomous way of life. As Mamdani suggests '[t]his autonomy was multifaceted: the tribal economy was a source of livelihood, tribal ideology a source of identity and common purpose' (Mamdani 1996a, p. 91). The land they occupied was neither useful nor suitable for European settlement. Consequently, the colonial state had no developmental agenda or project for the Luo. Indeed the popular social models of the 'industrious Kikuyu and the lazy Luo' are entrenched in the colonial productions of knowledge; they have continued to inform the constant creation and re-creation of ethnic categories in the post-colony (Mamdani 1996a, p. 91).

**Map showing majority ethnic groups that occupy each of colonially partitioned provinces**



Source: map resources 2008

Like economic participation, political participation did not escape the divisive machinery of the colonial government. In Kenya, there was a strict prohibition on political activity across African Reserves, meaning across ethnic lines. Sanger and Nottingham have highlighted that the first African political organization was known as the East African Association (EAA). EAA was established in 1919 in Kenya and was not a tribal organisation; but it was a body formed to protest against hut-tax, forced labour, and the *Kipande* (registration certificate), leading to the riots and shootings of March 1922 and the subsequent deportation of three Kikuyus: Harry Thuku, Waiganjo Ndotono, and George Mugekenyi (Sanger and Nottingham 1964, p.1). Sanger and Nottingham (1964, p.1) further reiterate that after this the colonial state resorted to the ideology of divide and rule which 'became government policy, supported strongly by the Missions, to encourage the development of tribal, or at best provincial, political bodies' (also see Omolo, 2002). The year between the 1920's and 1930's ushered in tribal associations such as the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA), the Kikuyu Provincial Association (KPA), the Kavirondo Taxpayers' Welfare Association (KTWA), the Teita Hills Association (THA), and the Ukamba Members' Association (UMA). The support of tribal bodies and political processes depicts an attitude of mind that lingered on among Kenya colonial administrators up to the brink of independence (Sanger and Nottingham 1964, p.1-2)

Because of the settler presence and Mau Mau (1952-1960), this restriction was not lifted until very late in the run up to independence (2006, p.101). Thus, 'ethnicity marked the earliest African political activism' (Orvis 2001, p.8). Indeed all pre-independence political parties were tribal; competitive political contests were between the Kenya African National Union (KANU) under the leadership of Jomo Kenyatta, and the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU), under the leadership of, among others, Daniel Arap Moi. At the time KANU was perceived to represent primarily the two largest ethnic groups in the country, Kenyatta representing Kikuyu and Odinga representing Luo (Orvis 2001; Anderson, 2005). KADU emerged, in reaction to KANU, as a coalition of smaller ethnic groups. They feared Kikuyu and Luo domination of the newly independent country and fought for *majimbo* (Regional federalism<sup>32</sup>) to protect them from central

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<sup>32</sup> The new Constitution of Kenya 2010 restructures the old system of provincial administration comprised of the provinces, districts, divisions and locations to create a two level system of the national government and 47 county governments. This number is based on the delineation of administrative districts as created under the Provinces and

(Kikuyu and Luo) domination (Orvis 2001; Anderson, 2005). Anderson (2005, p.547) points that Majimboism was initially promoted by KADU in the pre-independence negotiations between 1960 and 1963 as the basis for a devolved constitutional arrangement as a decentralization or federation, in which six or more provinces comprising independent Kenya would each have equal status to provide some leverage to smaller ‘minority’ communities against the dominance of larger communities. *Majimboists* were labeled as ‘tribalists who opposed the broader goals of nationalism’ (Anderson 2005, p.547). *Majimboism* as threat to Kenyatta’s call for national unity came to its demise when KANU won the 1963 election. Subsequently, Kenya became a de facto one-party state with the opposition KADU MPS joining KANU in the months following independence. In fact, as Orvis (2001,p.8) accounts, the reason why Kenya had one party state is because ‘KANU’s victory at independence led KADU leaders to accept a share of the spoils from within rather than remain in opposition, setting the stage for the one-party state under central control.’

However, this did not change the underlying ethno-regional dynamics. Having inherited a growing economy, Kenyatta allocated patronage with relative ease, permitting regional and ethnic ‘power barons’ a significant level of autonomy as long as they did not question his central decisions and absolute power. Legislative elections pushed local elites in and out of Parliament and power, as the regime mostly allowed competing leaders to contest openly for local supremacy under the one-party state (Orvis 2001). As in the late colonial period, the central government under Kenyatta, often by means of despotism, restricted politics chiefly to within ethnic groups. Moi, a Kalenjin and a Kenyatta protégée, became not only a symbol of ‘loyalty’ but of unity, and was ‘being groomed’ to inherit the top seat of the state. When Kenyatta died in 1978, Moi’s allegiance paid off, Kikuyus in Kenyatta’s inner circle failed to coerce Kenyatta into keeping the presidency ‘*in the House of Mumbi*’ (under Kikuyu control), Moi succeeded Kenyatta on the latter’s death (Orvis 2001, p.8).

Calls for *Majimboism* would resurface again, this time when Kenyans, fed up with extensive political decay, characterized by massive corruption and state violence in Moi’s government,

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Districts Act of 1992. These counties remain under the old regional/tribal boundaries; the devolved system has had the effect of decentralizing governance, but has not changed the way politics is done in Kenya, ethnicity continues to plague political discourse and social action in Kenya.

with the support of the international community began pushing for multi-party democracy. Klopp (2002) highlights that from 1991; KANU faction launched a series of *Majimbo* rallies. These rallies drew on the narrative of the pre-independence *Majimboism*. Klopp (2002) highlights that in the 1950s, this movement had also involved conservative white settlers fearful that universal franchise would result in a loss of control and property, particularly the loss of their large Rift Valley farms. This was an emerging shift in the structure of the colonial state where the whites who had been ‘the citizens’ and part of the civil society in the state, were now faced with the threat of decolonization were routing for regionalization to defend their interests. It is also widely believed that it was also a ploy of the British administrators to control the reforms that had reinstituted African political parties that had been banned following the Mau Mau Emergency regulations in June 1953. In the Lyttelton Constitution of 1954, Africans and Asians had been permitted to participate in central government through an electoral system. Beginning June 1955, political parties were again permitted, but only at district level and strictly with the approval of colonial officers tasked with the responsibility of registering parties. Parties at the National level were not allowed in this colonial ‘micro-management’ of re-emergent political activism’ (Anderson 2005, p.549). Klopp (2002) reiterates that the Africans particularly led by leaders of the small coastal and pastoralist communities (including Moi) served to steer ahead this colonial agenda to have a fragmented Kenyan society.

The *Majimboists* of colonial Kenya promoted the idea of provincial autonomy, reaffirming colonially defined boundaries that in reality included intermingled ethnic communities. This was done with the aim of uniting minority ethnic groups under a collective African leadership to undermine the support of Mau Mau freedom fighters, which in any case had adopted the meta-narratives of national liberation. Anderson (2005,p.550) observes that although African politicians were by no means always compliant with these aims, colonial policies had the effect of fostering local politics while frustrating any interests of national aspirations. With this, we had the development of ‘networks of patronage and clientage.’ Getting into independence, the colonial administration had already mobilized ethicized African politics through politicians like Moi and future fellow supporters of KADU in the likes of Masinde Muliro and Ronald Ngala (elected in 1957 for north Nyanza and coast respectively)(Anderson 2005,p.550). The colonial administration encouraged these men to build local power bases, to neutralize the politics of the anti-colonial Kikuyus. This saw the establishment of the Baringo District Independence Party by

Moi in 1958, first in his homeland, and then in the Kalenjin districts of Kipsigis, Nandi and Elgeyo. Anderson (2005) highlights, in the next two years, Moi extensively toured the Kalenjin-speaking areas of the Western Highlands in his Land Rover, mobilizing support at well-attended political rallies and speaking to the various African District Councils, all of this facilitated by the colonial administration. This constricted class-base and regional emphasis of politics was further strengthened by colonial regulations that prevented those elected to the Legislative Council from consolidating their position within broader party affiliations. The Lennox Boyd Constitution of 1957 increased the number of African representatives on the Legislative Council from 8 to 14, but there was still no prospect for national political organization. Anderson writes, 'the commitment of Moi and his confederates to regional politics lacked nationalist aspiration: 'Tribalism will live for at least another fifty years', Daniel Arap Moi told the BBC when interviewed in August 1958' (2005, p. 547-551).

Anderson maintains that when Moi, the strongest advocate of *Majimboism*, known never to have had any pretence to nationalist ambitions, took over after Kenyatta's death in 1978, he converted KANU into KADU. As a president, Moi reverted to his old schemes as the 'architect of the KADU alliance' to establish a series of bilateral political bargains that undermined Kenyatta's 'corporatist' structures of KANU, making KANU less nationalist in its politics, and far more like the old KADU – 'a party reliant upon an alliance of politicians who were firmly rooted in the local politics of patronage and redistribution, and a party that held within it supporters of *Majimboism*' (Anderson 2005, p.563).

What is important to note here is that even before independence Kenyans had been skilled in ethnic competition by British colonialists. Ajulu (1998,p.279) highlights that 'the struggles between KANU, KADU, KPU in the sixties, the rivalries between the Luo and Kikuyu ethnic groups throughout the 1970s, and the intra-Kikuyu rivalry in the dying days of the Kenyatta regime, all had one thing in common: ethnic mobilization for control of the independent state'. The divide and rule tactics served to entrench British imperialism but have obviously lived on to work against modern state formation in Kenya. Tangie (2006,p.5) points out 'the colonial state lacked legitimacy yet had to perform its functions of suppressing a restive population of subjects and destroying their institutions and values and replacing them with those that are reflective of the colonizers needs and interests'. Colonialism opened new sources of wealth and power for some

and threatened the social position and access to resources of others. 'Ethnicity emerged out of the consequent conflict over and (re)negotiation of the rules of custom and identity as individuals struggled to take advantage of the opportunities of colonialism or protect themselves against its disruptions' (Berman 1998,p.324). At the beginning of 1970s, Kenyatta appointed himself as the supreme leader of faithful Kikuyu ministers and district commissioners. 'The Kikuyus represent 20.9% of the population in 1979 but their share in the government is 30% throughout the 1970s' (Burgess *et al* 2009, p.6)

Therefore, at independence central province was already ahead and at a greater advantage economically given the pre-independence structure of the colonial political economy which placed the Kikuyus at a more dominant position. This bred resentment from other regions and ethnic groups led by the Luo who felt that the allocation and distribution of national resources by the central government did not favour them (Kwaja, 2009). In this view, ethnicity in Kenya is rooted in multifarious and paradoxical ways to the enduring legacies of uneven regional development. As Kwaja (2009,p.39) notes the 'capitalist development and centralization of power reinforced domination of the Kenyan economy by the Central Province and the Kikuyu, a process that withstood the twenty-four year reign of President Moi, a Kalenjin from the Rift Valley and was reinvigorated under President Kibaki's administration'. The continued disenfranchisement of most ethnic groups and exclusion from the benefits of capitalist development led to a growing concern by political elites from these communities on the ability and effectiveness of the central government system in equitable distribution of state resources to all Kenyans. *Majimboism* dominated Kenyan political debates into constitutional debates about presidential and political centralization of power, and the regional redistribution of resources that dominated Kenyan politics until 2005 when the draft constitution supported by the President Kibaki and Parliament was rejected in a referendum (Anderson 2005; Orvis 2001).

During the 2007-2008 post-election violence, Otieno (2008) stated that the communities feeling displaced and marginalized from the centre of power by the Kibaki administration banded together in Raila's Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) against the government. The explosion of the deep-seated anger against the Kikuyus into violence after the announcement of Kibaki as the winner in the presidential elections was an obvious eventuality, given the view by many Kenyans that Kikuyus have dominated power and the consumption of the "national cake" (Otieno,

in The Tokyo Foundation, 2008) since Kenya's independence in 1963. The Kikuyus, on the other hand, feel entitled to domination since they struggled against colonial imperialism. Otieno points out 'the Mau Mau war of independence was related to the Kikuyu uprising against the colonialists for their loss of land, the departing crown bequeathed shamelessly exploitative and divisive state machinery to the new power elite under Jomo Kenyatta, a Kikuyu. With a relatively more educated working class and a better physical infrastructure inherited from the white administrators, Kenyatta capitalized on these advantages to make the Kikuyu a powerful and envied community in the country's post-independence economic take off' (in The Tokyo Foundation, 2008).

Otieno (2008) further highlights that after the declaration of the state of emergency in Kenya in 1952, the British government followed with a land rationalization plan of 1954 known as the 'Swynnerton (1954-1955)<sup>33</sup> Plan'. And that under this plan 'Kenyans' (Kikuyus) were encouraged to buy land previously owned by the colonialists, the "white highlands". When the British farmers left, a vast area of land was unoccupied in a region previously owned by the Kalenjin and Maasai. As for the pastoralist Maasai, who had in any case lost their claim to a large part of the Rift Valley land through the 1904 and 1911 agreements<sup>34</sup> with the British colonial administration, there might not be much bitterness. The Kalenjins, however, witnessed their ancestral homeland annexed by the independent government and dished out to mainly Kikuyu settlers after independence. Otieno (2008) asserts that 'this Kikuyu resettlement plan was backed only by a section of the Kalenjin politicians. By 1971, over half of all arable land in the Northern Rift Valley, settled by Kalenjins, was in the hands of new Kikuyu buyers' (in The Tokyo Foundation 2008, p.1).

Ethnic politics in Kenya was further heightened during Moi's tenure. This was a period the country experienced economic and political decline and marginalization of non-Kalenjin ethnic groups exacerbated by President Moi's attempt to restructure Kenya's political economy. He was diverting resources and patronage from the Kikuyu, who benefited from Kenyatta's largesse, to his own Kalenjin ethnic group in the Rift Valley and political allies among the Abaluhya of Western Province and to various groups from Coast Province. As access to development

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<sup>33</sup> Swynnerton Plan was an important policy which anticipated the land settlement that would be agreed at independence, it also focused on the development of roads to facilitate development of cash crop production, tourism and help rural settlements (Burgess *et al* 2009).

<sup>34</sup> The historical dispossession of land by colonial powers through legal regimes and agreements that were not favourable to the Maasai community (Hughes 2006).



resources in Central Province and in neighbouring Embu and Meru Districts-regions - which comprise Kenya's economic and demographic core - diminished, and as Kikuyu civil servants and military officers were replaced by members of other ethnic groups more 'loyal' to Moi, discontent inevitably increased. The regime has responded with increased repression. By the mid-1990s President Moi was beginning to transform Kenya into a party state, using the ruling party to crush dissidence among both young radicals and conservative members of the Kikuyu establishment.

Ethnic mobilizations continued to characterize political and economic struggles in Kenya. Rawlinsons (2003) argues that in Africa the main criterion according to which socio-political groups define and identify themselves is rooted in ethnicity rather than class. It is through ethnic identification that competition for influence in the state and in the allocation of resources takes place, instead of it being a contest between the "haves" and the "have-nots" as in most western societies. This, Rawlinsons (2003) suggests, is despite the fact that in reality disparities in access to resources and policy influence are generally far more pronounced within ethnic communities than across them. The "big men" of every group lead a lifestyle very far removed from the vast majority of their followers, whose support for their community leaders is conditional on favours and special advantages bestowed on them through client-patron relationships. This system is replicated at every level, forming a dense trickle-down network of patronage sustained by channelling the state's revenues to one's own group through pork barrelling, rent-seeking and corruption, a complex network that involve members of parliament as well as provincial and district administrators who act as agencies tasked with mobilizing ethnic support to keep the president from their ethnic group in power, so that economic and political benefits can continue to flow to members of that particular ethnic group. Ajulu (1998) makes an observation that during the 1997 election campaigns in the rift valley province, president Moi's stronghold, the Keiyo district commissioner is reported to have urged the local community to vote for KANU in the following words:

... as an employee of Kanu government my livelihood depends on the very same system. Therefore I would not shy away from praying that President Moi be re-elected once more, to enable me to remain the DC ... Better the devil you are used to than the angel you do not know. It is scary to hear of these parties who usually claim that once they take over power from Kanu, they would dismantle the provincial administration and clip off powers of the police. Who will entertain that? (Daily Nation, 16 December 1997, quoted in Ajulu 1998, p.227).

One's ethnic membership qualifies him or her to stay in the helm of power, remaining the mediator between subjects and the state. In the multi-party era, most administrators continue to operate on behalf of the office that appoints them - the Office of the President (Klopp, 2001). There is always a relationship of bad blood between those who are selected by the government and those elected by the people such as MPs. Klopp (2001) observes that when the MP is a member of the opposition, the president officials go out of their way to make a good name for themselves by harassing and arresting opposition members to attract the President's attention for favours, such as a promotion or commendation in public for a job well done. Okondo (1995, p.130-31) captures this in the following: 'The Provincial Administration is very skilled at finding ways to listen to their "master's voice" and to manage politics in favour of the President and his party. It is the President's political arm throughout the country and it starkly discriminates between the President's men and the President's enemies'.

The Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) in an analysis titled: *It's the economy, stupid (not just "tribalism")*, sought to capture the disparities and cleavages created because of the discriminative patronage system that contributed to the mayhem:

A person born in the western Nyanza Province, the bedrock of ODM support, can expect to die 16 years younger than a fellow citizen in Central Province, Kibaki's home turf. Child immunization rates in Nyanza are less than half those in Central. Another impoverished region is North Eastern Province. While almost every child in Central attends primary school, only one in three does in North Eastern. More than nine out of every 10 women in North Eastern have no education at all. In Central, the proportion is less than 3 percent. In these two provinces, there is one doctor for 120,000 and 20,000 respectively (IRIN, January 2008, p.1 of 1)

In Kenya, politicians target public resources to their ethnic constituencies in their regions of origin. Kenya has had three presidents and thus three political regimes since independence. Both Kenyatta and Kibaki are from the Kikuyu community and Arap Moi is from Kalenjin Community. Social services infrastructure in the country like education and health facilities are characterized with regional inequalities with Central and the Rift valley regions having the best economic infrastructure as compared to other regions that have not had leaders in the positions of power in government. Under Kenyatta, the share of investment in road building was 44% in Kikuyu coalition areas and 32% in non-Kikuyu coalition areas. By the sixth year of Moi's reign after taking over from Kenyatta, Moi's ethnic political base was getting 67% of the roads budget compared to the 16% for the Kenyatta base (Robinson and Trovik, 2005, cites in Dafe 2009,p.8).

All newly created public universities under Moi were in Kalenjin dominated Rift valley or Nyanza province, the Luo dominated region. No university was located in central and Eastern provinces, which are primarily Kikuyu (Kiringai 2007, quoted in Dafe 2009, p.8). A recent study by the National Cohesion and Integration Commission NCIC (2011) reveals that political patronage has reduced the civil service into an exclusive club of the big communities, at the expense of the small communities; the Kikuyu leads the pack with 22.3 percent of all civil service, followed by the Kalenjin (16.7 percent), Luhya (11.3 percent), Kamba (9.7 percent), Luo (9.0 Percent) and (Kisi 6.8 percent), while other communities had less than one percent of their population in the civil service - Teso (0.9 percent), Samburu (0.6 percent), Pokomo (0.6 percent), Kuria (0.5 percent) and Mbeere (0.5 percent). The study also reveals that government departments were likely to employ members of ethnic groups affiliated to the ethnicity of department heads. The Statehouse employs 45.3 percent of staff from one ethnic group that is Kikuyus, and that other ministries that have a third of workers from a single ethnic group include Transport, Public works, Tourism, Local Government, Higher Education and Nairobi Metropolitan (National Cohesion and Integration Commission, 2011).

## **5.4 Conclusion**

I agree with Berman (1998) and Mamdani (1996a, 1996b and 2001a) that indeed the political and economic structures and practices of the colonial state have shaped the reality on the ground in the contemporary Kenyan state. Particularly the colonial practices of mapping through demarcation of political boundaries and classification of people that was in fact institutionalised by law, as well as European imagining of African cultures and institutions' (Berman, 1998) have reinvented African political processes along and within the cleavages of the "tribe"; and has created the conditions for Africans to think and act ethnically. This in many ways explains the existing ethnic competitions over property rights and access to resources that persists in Kenya. We discover that salience of patron–clients networks enshrined in moral ethnicity and political tribalism as Berman postulates arises from the inability to separate social differentiation and class formation, from debates over the legitimacy of political power and the definition of moral and political community largely defined in ethnic terms. It is within these intersecting and at times, contradicting social, cultural, economic and political processes that the modern state in Kenya has been socially constructed (Berman, 1998).

Blanton *et al* (2001) have cautioned against the exclusive reliance on deprivation-based grievances as predictors of ethnic violence, by claiming that they are inadequate empirically and also theoretically deficient. It will be grievous, however, to ignore the fact that in Kenya and other African countries, even as Blanton *et al* (2001) also acknowledge, the political elite use extensive and deeply felt grievances to persuade aggrieved individuals to participate in the collective action by convincing them that others are likely to participate as well, and produce the rewards - both public goods and selective incentives - that participants demand in return for their support. It remains that in Kenya, access to state resources and opportunities or on the other end, the marginalization from state resources is determined by ones ethnicity and region of origin. Regional development is determined by ethnic leaders' (patrons) access to the political and economic state machineries. Every region fights to have its leaders in power, as this has been the only means of ethno-regional survival. The calls for *Majimboism* (regional federation) was an attempt by the marginalized communities to get a share of public resources and to be able to manage their own development instead of leaving it to the government of the day; that was, in any case, directing all public resources to communities allied to state leaders. The new devolved government system is still new and its effect in redistributing public resources is yet to be properly felt or assessed.

## CHAPTER SIX

# Problematics and Discourses of Ethnicity in Contemporary Kenyan Society

## 6.1 Introduction

Despite the fact that ethnicity and ethnic politics continues to impede national development, and in fact, works against the material interest of ethnic groups, why does ethnic politics continue to drive the political and socioeconomic environments in Kenya? The political sphere in Kenya was even at independence was characterized by ethnicised discourses and ethnic propaganda. It is troubling that the situation has worsened in the aftermath of the introduction of multiparty democracy, political discourse and parties have taken on ethnic shapes and this is also apparent in voting. This, I contend, is linked to the point I raised earlier – apparent linkage of wellbeing of communities and their development to having ethnic members occupying the state institution. In the recent elections, for example, Luo-land voted overwhelmingly for Mr. Raila Odinga, Kalenjin-land for President Moi, Luhya-land for Kijana Wamalwa and Kikuyu-land for Kibaki. It was among the communities that did not have their own presidential candidates that President Moi broke away from his rivals (Weekly Review, 9 January 1998).

Although the political sphere in Kenya has become relatively open, characterized by increased political debate through the media and an apparently budding civil society (Wanyande, 2009), this character of the public sphere is not shaped by a de-ethnicised civil society but rather by political elites championing ethnic divisions. In this Chapter, I focus on problems and discourses of ethnicity in the contemporary Kenyan Society. This chapter explores the significance of ethnicity in the socioeconomic and political spheres of the modern Kenyan society, and also interrogates some of the deep-seated issues that are used to fuel ethnic tensions in Kenya. This chapter also seeks to find out how (and why) ethnicity is still a salient feature of political identity and democratic processes five decades after the independence of Kenya. It outlines the role of ethnicised discourses in public space and effect that it has in perpetuating disunity.

## 6.2 The Ethnicised Discourses in the Public Sphere

While the root causes of the 2008 post-election violence in Kenya lie in the disputed election (and previous electoral disputes), inequality, economic decline, and long-standing conflicts over land and political power, it is quite clear that ethnicised hate speech by leaders incited the violence. During the period before the 2007 general elections in Kenya, politicians and the political elite employed the tactic of using negative ethnic stereotypes in their political campaigns, and in their political addresses and speeches to urge voters from supporting opposing political groups. The content of the messages emanating from political gatherings of the Party of National Unity (PNU) and the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) in the opposition during the 2007 campaigns reflect the historical divisions, the politicization of ethnicities and class formations. The ODM, mainly Kalenjin leaders in the Rift Valley are reported to have been vocal on uprooting the ‘snake’ or what they called Kikuyu settlers and foreigners from the indigenous Kalenjin land (Ahlberg *et al* 2011). The hate speech had been broadcasted over vernacular (local language) radio SMS, leaflets, *barazas* (informal meetings) and digital media to communicate hate in Kenya (Hirsh n.d, p.4-5). These discourses carried cascades of messages that can only be described as of “positive self-presentation” and “negative other-presentation”, were appropriated in many forms, including epithets, ethnic slurs, insulting language, name-calling, and derogatory references; and inciting speech. From the PNU group and Kibaki supporters the following was being circulated:

Do you want to be ruled by Luo to take us back to joblessness? Safeguard the Kingdom. Let us ALL come out and give all the votes to Kibaki so that we are not ruled by an *uncircumcised man* who will make us wear shorts and plunder all our wealth. It’s your vote that will prevent our country from going back to Egypt. May our God bless you (quoted in Onyango 2001, p.10) (emphasis mine).

This choice of this type of discourse in the public sphere is not merely a political attack on political personalities. These are strong political messages against other ethnic groups have the possibility of creating hate, suspicion and ethnic conflict based on stereotypical sentiments. The above messages are coded messages, not only saying - do not vote for the other, but do not vote for him because he represents the “other” ethnic group who are lazy (stereotypical sentiment), hence the take us to joblessness and poverty. As the turn of phrases show, this and other speech entail the dangers of losing ground, privilege and riches of the state, if the power goes to the

other side – “the other”. There is a suggestion that Luo men are not circumcised,<sup>35</sup> and this, entails immaturity and boyishness. Thus, if elected their immaturity and recklessness will plunge the country into political and economic turmoil of colonialism (read in, take us back to Egypt); here, Egypt signifies a place of slavery and suffering. The issue of the ‘uncircumcised Luo’ has often been continuously raised and used as a chest thumping rhetoric that seeks to assert that undergoing circumcision automatically initiates a man to maturity, and, therefore, gives the ability to lead. In essence, what this discourse seeks to achieve is to cultivate prejudice and use it to gain unrestrained political support from the respective ethnic group.

The history of speech, power and violence in Kenya emanates from the British apparatus of ‘divide and rule’ and it is where the notions of the “lazy Luo” and “industrious Kikuyu” began. It was also quite prominent in the leadership of Kenya’s first president Kenyatta; expressed in his sentiments against Oginga Odinga (read Luo people) when the latter defected from KADU to form his own political party and has lived on as political machineries for mobilising ethnic support and alliances in the Moi and Kibaki eras, as Atieno-Odhiambo (2002, p.2430) captures:

The Kikuyu notion of civil society was extended by Kenyatta to the political arena of the state in 1966-9 when he accused the Kenya Peoples Union (Odinga’s party after fall out with Kenyatta) of being chameleons—definitely not part of civil society, and by extension therefore not legitimate citizens of the Kenya state that he ran. The Luo were targeted for this rhetorical exclusion ostensibly because they did not practise male circumcision. This specifically central-Kenyan discourse on being cut—‘the narcissism of small differences’ as Freud once spoke of it, the tendency to think of ourselves as superior to others because of some laughably superficial and non-essential feature—resurfaced in 1992 as two Kikuyu barons, Kenneth Matiba and Mwai Kibaki, bid for the presidency against Oginga Odinga. It was widely asserted that Odinga ought not to be elected because he was not circumcised. Odinga understood its potential damage, and raised it as a debating issue at a rally in Kiambu in late 1992. In Meru the Ford-Kenya party secretary and parliamentary candidate Gitobu Imanyara was severely ridiculed for fronting for Odinga, an uninitiated ‘boy’. Thus the ball set in motion by Kenyatta found its everyday life extended in the bid for a post-Moi state. The issue of circumcision also confronted the National Democratic Party presidential candidate Raila Odinga in 1997, again in central Kenya. Raila Odinga treated it as a case of false consciousness, bantering facetiously that the women were not complaining, and calling for a focus on the real issues of the campaign.

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<sup>35</sup> See discussion below for detail treatment of the use of this practice to delegitimize opposition. It is also formed around masculinity, which certainly represents major exclusion of women from the public sphere, not only rendering a subtle image of them as incapable, but also turning them into an invisible one.

The circumcision rhetoric in Kenya demonstrates the strength of public discourse but also just how discourse can be instrumental as recourse for power, the question one needs to ask: is circumcision indeed the criterion for men to enter into the civil society? The language is indeed a powerful asset of ‘identity and readily available symbol of ethnicity with the prescriptive power for legitimacy’ (Atieno-Odhiambo 2002, p. 244). Considering the dominance of these discourses in political and economic lives, it is no surprise that Kikuyus have been at the helm of leadership in Kenya, with three presidents so far, coming from Central Province.

But the question remains, why would educated Kenyan elite engage in such outrageous ethnic discourses as strategies for ethnic political support? A repetitive exposure of recipients to a particular discourse has a cognitively efficient effect in that they are ‘automatically activated when encountering a member of a social group with little if any recourse to the ‘data’ at hand’ (Koller 2012, p.21). Alonso (1994,p.393) defines ethnicity as ‘the variant that privileges style of life indexes of status such as dress, language, religion, food, music and occupation’ which is infused with pride, interests and political expedience. From this, we can see the interplay of myths and symbols in inculcating ethnicity, and asserting ethnic superiority through carefully selected discourse. Here, circumcision is chosen because it is exclusive in that it is a practice that the Kikuyu’s practice, but which the Luo do not. It is, therefore, a practice that stands for the whole group and asserts their difference to the Luo’s. I repeat this quote (because it has a particular resonance to this issue: ‘...they gloss over intra-group differences and the resulting prejudice is bound to be harmful for the social relations between, and the self-image of, members of a particular group’ (Koller, 2012, p, 21). Ultimately, it is part of a system of knowledge that seeks to exclude.

In Kenya, the symbols appropriated in bargaining for collective interest and to include and exclude are names and “exclusive” cultural practices. Surnames readily identify difference of ethnic origin; they are used for inclusion or exclusion in public spheres of interest such as employment, higher education institutions, scholarships etc. In the political sphere, Kikuyu leaders use the practice of circumcision among other social and cultural traditions to validate their superiority, and thus legitimize the fact that they cannot and should not be governed by a Luo president. The constantly repeat the assertion: because they are not circumcised, Luo men are



not 'real men' per se, but 'boys'. Apart from its sexist tone and patriarchal power structure that excludes and belittles women, such devices are pursued to appeal to Kikuyus to vote for Kikuyu leaders, and an attempt to deny Luo's 'men' from assuming political office.

Luos on the other hand have always asserted their "superior" intellectual prowess; the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) party supporters also circulated the following message during the 2007 campaigns:

A Deadly Mountain Flu known as PNU, which affects the brain, has been reported in Central Kenya. The region is under quarantine. People in other parts of Kenya are advised to take ODM pills. One full orange for 3 months to avoid infection (quoted in Onyango 2008, p.9)

Onyango also argues that this was also a coded ethnic discourse. PNU party was seen as a having its base in Central province and therefore a Kikuyu party. The point of the message was to paint the party as a negative thing (flu or disease) that is associated with Mount Kenya region. The mountain refers to the Mount Kenya region, which is home to the mega GEMA (Kikuyu, Embu and Meru Association) (2002, p.9).

In spite of the above, an opinion poll by Gallup shows that Kenyans put national identity before ethnicity: 85% of Kenyans saw themselves as Kenyans first and only 15% placed ethnic identity first (Gallup 2008). This contradicts the findings of the Waki Commission Report (2008), the official commission of inquiry, which investigated the 2007 post-election violence in Kenya. This report indicates that people were attacked based on their 'ethnicity and political leanings.' Furthermore, in two different BBC documentaries done by Mike Wooldridge and Pascale Harter in 2008 shortly after the post-election violence, we hear first-hand the voices of Kenyans in different regions in the country suggesting the significance of ethnicity in defining political affiliation, political power relations and control of resources. Here are few extracts from the BBC documentaries capturing ethnic discourses and ethnic tensions during the post-election violence.

Pascale in Eldoret, western region of the Rift valley province speaking to Duncan- a youth leader and other community members of Luo and Kalenjin tribes:

**Voice of Duncan:** *We want to send a very strong message to Kibaki, because we cannot get him, we are going to work on his tribe which is the Kikuyu here.*

**Voice of Pascale:** *Is it the Kikuyu tribes themselves? Ordinary Kikuyu who live among you as your neighbours? Is it them that you resent?*

**Voice of Duncan:** *The point is this, when we voted Kibaki in 2002, we voted Kibaki on the platform of change and we wanted him to assist all Kenyans. When Kibaki went to power, he began to assist Kikuyus. The rest of Kenyans are left in poverty; so actually this fight, it is a balance of resources, the 'haves' and the 'have-nots' and we are seeing that Kikuyus are continuously getting in the brackets of the 'haves', while other Kenyans are left wondering whether they are even Kenyans in the first place*

**Voice of Pascale:** *Why target your neighbours they didn't rig the elections?*

**Voice of Kalenjin elder:** *People have to fight, Kikuyu is a Kikuyu, and people felt that all Kikuyus were the supporters of Kibaki, so they had to fight them so Kibaki would feel the pinch. We are 42 tribes, the other tribes support ODM, and the Kikuyus are the only ones supporting Kibaki. How can one tribe defeat all the other? That was a Kikuyu plan. One tribe cannot lead the other 41 tribes; this is a war now we are fighting for power. Kikuyus should be on their own, we should divide Kenya.*

Mike Wooldridge speaking to youths in Nairobi's Kibera slum concerning the ethnic violence that rocked Kenya in the turn of the year:

**Voice of man:** *We had decided to this as our own obligation to see that justice has taken course.*

**Voice of man:** *The Kikuyu tribe we did not go out to fight, we had to stay and defend our families and our properties and our families because it was the other tribes that were coming in to force us out...*

**Voice of Wooldridge:** *You say that you were defending your people, your property, but in doing that when you look back, did you take part in any action that you think were wrong or do you still believe you were right to do what you did?*

**Voice of man:** *When their people come in our area we expose them naked, we look if they are Luo, whether they are circumcised or not, so what we did, they were being killed and thrown into the fire that they have started the fire...*

**Voice of man:** *I have realized that I have an identity and at times I will be forced to run to my identity, and my identity is my tribe...*

Mike Wooldridge in the Rift valley province Kericho town speaks to Mr. and Mrs. Earnest and Lydia Cheruiyot arap Langat, and their daughter Nancy belonging to the Kalenjin community:

**Voice of Wooldridge:** *This is the epicenter of violence against the largest ethnic group, the Kikuyus and others seen as supporting president Kibaki and his party*

**Voice of Lydia:** *This young man had come here to build a school, but during clashes young people came and burnt the school down. The man was educating their children but they say "he does not belong to us."*

**Voice of earnest:** *Kenya became colonized ethnically.*

**Voice of Wooldridge:** *Your father says that what happened at the beginning of the year was, the violence was shocking and shouldn't have happened....But he also clearly place great store by Kenyans tribal identities. He says it is very important and indeed tribal ownership of land is an important concept as well. Do you agree with him?*

**Voice of Nancy:** *Well, not completely. In fact, that tribal ownership seems to belong more to the older generation because they grew up in their own communities, they had traditions they were keeping, but among us the younger ones, we wish we could move away from that tribal issue.*

**Voice of Wooldridge:** *Not only have most of your daughters now moved away from here living in Nairobi and abroad, but of course two of them have actually married Kikuyus, haven't they? Was that something that you had any difficulty dealing with?*

**Voice of Lydia:** *Yes, not only have my children married Kikuyus, they have married other tribes as well, and then I would tell them, no! You know these tribes are not like us, but they would say "mummy what is the difference?" I mean we are all alike, but although I*

*was afraid, now these men they have married from other tribes are very good, and I am beginning to think maybe after all I shouldn't have discouraged them.*

Mike Wooldridge in a refugee camp in Nakuru in the Rift valley province, where 14,555 mostly displaced Kikuyus took refuge during the clashes speaking to Peter, a Kikuyu who is married to a Kalenjin woman:

**Voice of Peter:** *It was terrible because I just saw those people coming with arrows and panga's hunting for my life....My wife left. Now she is in Eldoret; she was rejected by her parents because of my children.*

**Voice of man:** *I was forced to come to this camp because the Kalenjins were attacking this town with fire and arrows...I was the supporter of Kibaki not Raila*

**Voice of man:** *We are Kisii's, and also Luhya's and some Luo's*

**Voice of man:** *You know the reason why we were chased away from that place, the Kalenjin people; they have been claiming that this land was their ancestral land...so I was told this by those Kalenjins, "you people you are not supposed to come back here and we don't want you back here again". We cannot go back.*

Mike Wooldridge in Nairobi's middle class society, speaking to the daughters of Mr. and Mrs. Earnest and Lydia Arap Cheruiyot Langat living and working in the capital Nairobi:

**Voice of Wooldridge:** *Your family's roots are in the part of the country where the issue of land obviously does arouse strong feelings. It's clear at least from what your father was saying that there are many people who feel that there are fundamental issues of ownership of land to be resolved, but do those sort of issues weigh as strongly for you now here in the capital?*

**Voice of Earnest's daughter 1:** *Land is still really important. People should feel free and comfortable to buy their property and know that it is safe and secure; it is a principle, even if the younger generation isn't investing as much in land.*

**Voice of Wooldridge:** *In urban life, are there different boundaries that are still ethnic boundaries, no longer to do with land but with something else?*

**Voice of Earnest's daughter 2:** *Definitely, you find that when you are recruiting, you only recruit those who are one tribe to work in a particular area, are this person a Kikuyu? Can they work in a Kalenjin area? If they can't you won't hire them, so that is definitely happening in most companies.*

**Voice of Wooldridge:** *Is that your experience too as well?*

**Voice of Earnest's daughter 3:** *Yeah, there is an unspoken tension that, its there but it's not just articulated and we are not being proactive about it, so it is very real to us in urban life.*

The above extracts clearly show the tensions and conflicts that are rooted in ethnicised relations among Kenyans. We cannot deny that the 2007/2008 political campaigns and post-election violence was a manifestation of the height of ethnic politics in Kenya. Ethnic prejudice is a central aspect of the private intra-ethnic conversations, and it is at times manifested in the public domain. It does shape social and political relations of Kenyans and how they see each other and relate to one another. It is this element of ethnicity that I have sought to accentuate as very crucial in in political manoeuvres and flight towards the helm of the state power and economy, controlling both public goods and the market. In this regard, Berman's view that a fundamental character of ethnicity is apparent in its deliberate activation as a combination of 'identity, interest and common action' (1998, p.312) is clearly on the point. Ethnic collective action is primarily a process of deliberate political interaction between self- interested actors with conflicting interests. Once more, Berman captures this precisely when he states that '[h]ere we encounter the distinctive duality of ethnicity as a cultural identity and consciousness laden with possibilities for political mobilization and as a discourse which arranges collective memory as a basis for political action' (1998, p.312).

### **6.3 Ethnicity - a Salient Feature of Political Identity and Democratic Processes in Kenya**

Five decades after independence, ethnicity still plays a defining role in the lives of many Kenyans. Kenya became British protectorate in 1895<sup>36</sup>, soon after the British colonialists

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<sup>36</sup> Kenya was under British East Africa Company: 1888-1895; under the East African Protectorate: 1895-1920 and a British Colony : 1920-1963 (Low 1965)

stripped the Kenyan population of the most fertile lands (the white highlands) to distribute to European settlers (Weber 2009). This was done ‘to build up economic prosperity through a strong export sector of agricultural products’ (Low, 1965, p.22). These ‘white highlands’ were traditionally inhabited by the Kikuyu ethnic group but also populated by nomadic groups, such as the Kalenjin, Maasai, and Turkana (Wamwere, 2008,p.20). During independence white settlers who were leaving the country sold their farms to the Kenyan state through the Swynnerton Plan as mentioned earlier. This plan was not drawn to ensure equity in land redistribution; it was an activity whose interest was for the white land owners to sell back the land. The Kikuyu, who were originally chased off their land, took this opportunity and bought former white farms. The lop-sidedness of the ‘Swynnerton Plan’ ensured that the Kikuyus bought land that had belonged to the Kalenjin, the Maasai and coastal communities, especially farmland in the Rift valley and Coast provinces. The resettlement of Kikuyus in formerly predominantly Kalenjin areas bred ethnic animosities between the Kikuyu and other ethnic groups; the land issue remains an issue of contention to date and is often manipulated by the political elite to gain ethnic support for their political endeavours (Otieno 2008; Throup 1993). Weber postulates, in addition, ‘through the possession of fertile farm land, the Kikuyus had the means for political mobilization and consolidated their domination in the political sphere’ (2009, p.14). The salience of ethnic animosity in Kenya, thus, not only emanates from the colonial state but from the failure of the post-colonial state to address the structural problems created by the colonial polity.

Kenya prospered under its first president Jomo Kenyatta, the production sector saw an increase in coffee and tea production. In the service sector, Kenya’s tourist industry was established as an important foreign exchange earner. The development trajectory was guided by careful macroeconomic policies and extensive investments in infrastructure, and the expansion of education. From 1963 to 1978, the economy grew at a rate of 5 to 8 percent in every year (Barkan 2004, p.88). Jomo Kenyatta has often been credited for trying to unite the Kenyan society under a nationalistic umbrella. For example, Nyangena tells us that Kenyatta, ‘[i]n his inaugural address, he promoted a concept that would eventually become an official motto now incorporated in the county’s coat of arms: *Harambee*, or ‘let us work together’ (Nyangena 2003, p.7), and also declaring Swahili a national language in building a free nation.

These sentiments are not without criticisms. A significant critique that has been raised against Kenyatta's supposed "nation building" effort is that, while his speech epitomized the rhetoric of national unity, he failed to take any steps towards addressing the structurally divisive injustices of the colonial state and most prominently the land issue. Barkan has reiterated that '[i]f Kenyatta's Kenya had a basic flaw, it was that most of its prosperity was concentrated among the members of Kenyatta's ethnic group, the Kikuyu' (2004, p.88). The Kikuyus occupy the central province, north and west of Kenyan capital Nairobi and comprise the largest ethnic group in Kenya (with 22 percent of the population), formed the core of Kenya's nationalist movement and came to dominate the civil service and the private sector during the 1960s and 1970s (Barkan 2004, p.88). Kenyatta's capitalist stance met the nationalistic ideologies he preached to the nation. His fallout with Oginga Odinga was largely due to his uncompromising stance on capitalism and Oginga Odinga's insistence on socialist policies. Faced with opposition from Luo leaders, Oginga Odinga and Tom Mboya, he mobilised ethnic support by forming the Kikuyu, Embu, Meru Association (GEMA) in 1973 (Bayart, 1993; Onyango, 2008). The resentment that Luo's and Kalenjin's have towards the Kikuyu is directly linked to the disproportionate distribution of spoils of power, the difficulties of unequal regional development (1993, p.55) and specific to the Kalenjins, failure to address the land question.

Once Daniel Arap Moi took power in 1978, Moi sought to redress these disparities through redistributive policies. Moi continued with the nation building rhetoric of Kenyatta, his motto was Nyayo (footsteps) – following in the footsteps of his predecessor. With the countries eminent transition to competitive politics, Moi deliberately united several smaller ethnic groups and created what is now called the Kalenjin<sup>37</sup> tribe to build up a strong support base; five distinct ethnic groups - the Nandi, Kipsigis, Elgeyo, Marakwet, and Pokot - were united with Moi's Tugen ethnic group to form the greater Kalenjin ethnic group (Ogot 2005p.205). History repeated itself in that Moi's redistribution efforts favoured his own ethnic group - the Kalenjin – and, marginally, other disadvantaged tribes in the Rift valley (Barkan, 2004; Onyango, 2008; Throup, 1993). According to Bayart (1993), Moi quickly became acquainted with the Asian and Coastal business affairs of the country acquiring investments in all sectors of the economy. Following in the footsteps of many African leaders, he amassed wealth and assets - in

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<sup>37</sup> Before the electoral campaigning of President Moi, the Kalenjin ethnic group was non-existent (Weber, 2008).

land, and in transportation, oil distribution, films, food industry, banking, tyre industry and civil engineering. This corruption spilled into every level of political and economic life in Kenya as government officials acquired public wealth, and land grabbing became the order of the day, while ordinary Kenyans increasingly became more and more alienated from the public sphere and the economy. Moi's regime became increasingly repressive, demanding allegiance only to his rule, rewarding submissive members of the legislature with ministerial positions or cash and expelling from the ruling party (the Kenya African National Union (KANU)) anyone who dared criticize his policies. Elections were often rigged, the press and civil society<sup>38</sup> that were pressurizing the government to improve governance and open up the political space for public participation were suppressed, and opponents were jailed. Human rights violations, including torture became increasingly common (Throup 1993; Barkan 2004; Wanyande 2009).

Those cleavages, disparities and ethnicised politics continue to characterize Kenya's national politics even under Kibaki's reign. Ahlberg *et al* (2011) have reiterated that the 2007 events were not spontaneous, but rather a product of the historical developments of a Kenyan society strongly segregated especially in terms of wealth. It is a society where, according to Kenya Land Alliance, more than 65% of all arable land is owned by 20% of the population, leaving millions of people landless (Lumumba, 2004). This makes the poor masses an easy prey for ethnicised political mobilization; a specialization of political elites eyeing the control of state coffers and certain political gains. According to the Waki Commission (2008) and the Human Rights Watch (2008), as the displaced people mostly the Kikuyu, moved from Eldoret, the epicenter of violence bringing stories of brutality and atrocities of burning, looting, rape and murder, tensions were heightened among the Kikuyu. The Kikuyu local leaders and elites are reported to have reacted by organizing to contribute money for self-defence (Ahlberg *et al* 2011).

Thus in Kenya, ethnic and racial identity became to be of more value than national identity due to feelings of exclusion from the state institutions, grievances of human rights violations directed at communities, politics of ethnic patronage, struggle for national resources, political betrayal and the absence of well understood national narratives of collective solidarity and shared

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<sup>38</sup> This comprised members of the Citizen Coalition for Constitutional Change, CLARION, Centre for Democracy and Governance, the Institute for Education in Democracy (IED), the National election Monitoring Unit (NEMU) the Kenya Human Rights Commission, the National Executive Council (Wanyande , 2009 p.15).



moments of happiness and pain (Peoples Conference, March 2012). Pondering over the state of political chaos and identity in Kenya, Weber (2009, p.7) lists four factors that might have contributed to the persistence of ethnic politics in Kenya and not in Tanzania; these are: ‘(1) ethnic structures, (2) colonial history, (3) land distribution, and (4) nation building policies’. Weber’s (2009) analysis, comparing ethnicity in Kenya and Tanzania reveals that the ethnic structure (i.e. the number and size of ethnic groups) of a country might determine its vulnerability to political elitist mobilization along ethnic lines. Demographic factors are very important in the question of power. As Weber put it, building ethnic support base is determined by the structure of ethnic groups which maybe few or large ethnic groups in which case the politicians can constitute a winning majority by focussing solely on one ethnic group: ‘large enough to secure benefits in the competition for spoils but also small enough to maximize the per capita value of these benefits’ (Weber 2009, p.7). However, in countries with a high number of small ethnic groups, politicians are unable to mobilize supporters on the basis of ethnicity, and might, therefore, decide to focus on broader national programs to form a winning majority.

Kenya presents both cases of few large ethnic groups and various small ethnic groups. However, there is no single ethnic group that is large enough to make a winning majority (Hameso 1997). Political leaders therefore resort to forging “winning” alliances; that is seeking support from a number of demographically important ethnic groups. At Kenya’s independence, this was manifested in the form of the big groups comprising the Kikuyu and Luo; mainly followers of Kenya African National Union (KANU) versus the small groups that mainly supported Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU). KADU was mainly a party of the groups from the Coast Province but also with the Western Province Luhya groups. A fall out between the Luo and the Kikuyu and the subsequent establishment of a Luo Party – the Kenya Peoples Union (KPU) in 1966, forced Kenyatta to fortify his rule by seeking the support of his ethnic community, he formed the GEMA community in 1973, comprised of Kikuyu, Embu, Meru Association, forming a large ethnic alliance. Similarly, when President Moi took over Kenya’s Presidency after Kenyatta’s death in 1978, Moi also employed the same strategy that revolved around the Kalenjin (the Kipsigis, Marakwet, Nandi, Pokot, Elgeyo and Tugen), and the Maasai, the Turkana and the Samburu (KAMATUSA) plus other small groups to counteract the opposition. This strategy was very pertinent to his political survival considering Moi’s Tugen ethnic group is demographically negligible at 1.5 percent (Hameso 1997; Ogola 2008; Weber 2009).

Ethnic politics and alliances began to manifest in electoral processes as early as during the short-lived multiparty period from 1963 to the ‘Little General Elections’ of 1966. The voting patterns then are similar to the ones that emerged after reinstating multiparty politics in Kenya in the 1990s. During the 1963 general elections, KADU (party of President Moi and politicians in his boat) drew support mainly from the Coast, Rift Valley and parts of Western Province. KANU, at the time under the leadership of Jomo Kenyatta, with Oginga Odinga as his deputy, garnered support from Central, Nyanza, Nairobi, Eastern, and parts of Western province. In the 1966 elections, Odinga, who had walked out of the ruling party to establish his short-lived Kenya People Union (KPU), only received votes from Nyanza; all except one of the KPU MPs came from Odinga's Luo stronghold in Nyanza. When Moi was in office, KANU drew support from Kalenjin and the same alliance of minority ethnic groups, while the old Kenyatta and Odinga coalitions, now in separate opposition parties continues to draw support from the same ethnic constituencies (Ajulu 1998; Throup 1993).

During the 2002 election, which saw Daniel Arap Moi's favoured candidate Uhuru Kenyatta defeated, Kibaki and Odinga had led the National Rainbow Coalition (NRC) made up of politicians from a variety of parties, politicians and communities opposed to Moi. A pre-election deal between them fell apart as the conservative Kibaki used the presidency to entrench his own power and to favour his closest allies at the expense of the coalition and his alliance partners. By the time of the 2005 constitutional referendum, Odinga had become a fierce critic of Kibaki. The referendum itself was the result of a tortuous process of constitutional reform. Kibaki and Odinga had agreed to institute this reform – long called for by many politicians in Kenya – when they took power. Odinga believed that Kibaki had agreed to a diminution of presidential powers and the creation of the post of prime minister with extensive role and power.

National Alliance Party of Kenya (NAK) of Mwai Kibaki, by then president, and LDP of Raila Odinga, became imminent following claims by LDP that NAK had defaulted on a pre-election memorandum of understanding (MOU) guaranteeing equal sharing of power. Perpetual bickering and squabbling characterized the NRC government leading to the ultimate fallout in 2005 between Raila Odinga and his lieutenants, on one side, and Kibaki and his supporters, on the other. The disintegration of NRC had far-reaching ramifications in the country's political

landscape. Clearly, what has taken place is not a shift in alliance of class forces but a change in the pattern or traditions of political discourse.

The 1992 and 1997 elections confirm the overwhelming centrality of ethnicity in political mobilization in Kenya. The legacy of colonialism in this can perhaps be quickly established through a side by side contrast of the colonial and post-colonial socioeconomic and political structures of Kenya and Tanzania. The German rule in Tanzania, unlike the British divide and rule policy in Kenya, did not interfere with the indigenous communities, but maintained homogeneous communities (Weber 2009). Weber (2009) highlight further that the German did not rule the natives through use of chiefs; thus, these ethnic entities were not governed by a local ethnic leaders but by African agents - the so-called *Maakida*, mostly well-educated Muslims from the coastal area who spoke Swahili (Weber 2009). The imposition of these foreign Tanzanian leaders governing population entities that spoke a different vernacular hindered the development of strong ethnic consciousness. In contrast, Kenya was ruled through local or traditional chiefs, as part of the British indirect rule. When British rule took over in Tanzania after the Second World War, the British tried to enforce ethnic entities with ethnic local leaders; however, in any case, the Tanzanians had already been nationally united against the Germans during the Maji Maji rebellion. Owing to the different experience in Kenya, there was division within British administration, with opposing views about how administrative structures should be executed. Weber points out that Charles Dundas, the Secretary for Native Affairs, advocated regional instead of ethnic-based administrative boundaries, and he ‘called for the development of village and regional policies rather than the scientifically advocated creation of ‘tribes’’(2009, p.12).

Weber (2009) suggests that the two countries also differed in their strategic importance for Britain<sup>39</sup>. Kenya was meant to develop as the economic centre of East Africa, and policies were implemented to guarantee that white settlers were granted access to land and provided with sufficient infrastructure. Since the Kenyan population had to bear the costs of these policies, the British administration undertook measures to ensure that they would not unite and rebel against the colonialists. Colonialists in Tanzania, home to only few European settlers, demanded

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<sup>39</sup> Note, Tanzania (then known as Tanganyika) was first under German control from 1880s to 1919, then under British control from 1920-1961.

relatively little infrastructure including land. Kenya's fate is the reverse, creating major demand on the infrastructure and particularly land, and differential allocation of it; this continues to fuel ethnic animosity between the Kikuyus, the Kalenjins and Maasai in Kenya. British colonialists had only a negligible interest in the Tanzanian agricultural production (Brett, 1973). Contrastingly, the British wanted to develop a major export hub in Kenya; this export production was the domain of white settlers; this meant they had to seize land from the African population and redistribute the land to white settlers. However, the British administration in Tanzania felt that 'the first duty of the Government was to the native' (Brett 1973,p.224). While Kenyans were not allowed to grow cash crops, but urged to work on Europeans farms to be able to pay heavy taxes, Tanzanian farmers were explicitly encouraged to cultivate cash crops. Through the existence of the Tanzanian farmers who were supported by the British administration, Tanzania was less interesting for European farmers than Kenya. Therefore, compared to Kenya, only few Europeans settled in Tanzania. This freed the Tanzanian post-independence government of the need to re-distribute land to the population. Furthermore, since the Tanzanian population was not burdened with heavy costs, there was less need to oppress them systematically. This led to the formation of regional and national associations comprising various ethnic groups, such as the Mbeya District Original Tribes Association and the Kuria Union emerged (Tripp 1999, p.39). Moreover, Tanzania had a nationalist movement; the Tanganyika African Association, a truly national association uniting all ethnic groups. In Kenya, the independence movement started off as a primarily Kikuyu nationalist movement with the Kikuyu organization, the Mau-Mau. Thus, we can see that colonial rulers laid the foundation of strong ethnic consciousness in Kenya and reduced ethnic consciousness in Tanzania (Weber 2009).

The salience of ethnicity in Kenya is also due to the fact that leaders who took over after Kenya's independence failed to create nationalistic policies<sup>40</sup>. This can be identified in language policy in

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<sup>40</sup> One should not forget in this comparison that the cultivation of a more nationalistic umbrella in Tanzania is owed to the work of Julius Nyerere who formulated a socialist vision for Tanzania. Weber (2009) highlights that Nyerere's villagization policy of establishing Ujamaa villages (Nyerere, 1966a), establish with among others, the intent to facilitate ease in providing basic infrastructures such as education and health facilities, and the subsequent resettlement of Tanzanian population in these communal farm land. The Villagization project in Tanzania although highly disputes and resisted by the people and forced on the people, had the impact of uniting Tanzanians. Barkan (1994) mentions that by 1976, almost 80 percent of the Tanzanian population was living in Ujamaa villages (1994, p.20). Despite the fact that Nyerere's villagisation project has been highly criticised as the wrong incentives for economic growth, 'its effects on equal land distribution seem favourable. No ethnic group was favoured in the redistribution of land' Weber (2009,p.15). This obviously stands in contrast to Kenyatta's failures to address the land redistribution issue in Kenya

Kenya. Although Kenyatta introduced Swahili as a national language, like in the colonial policies, the Kenyan population was effectively denied a common language to communicate and organize nationally (which was part of the 'divide and rule' policy of the British colonials). In the post-independence period, the Kenyan government placed more emphasis on the use of local vernaculars<sup>41</sup> and English than of Swahili. Weber (2009) maintains that Kenyan experts provide further evidence for the use of vernaculars in the education system. The Kenyan education policy foresaw that teachers use local vernaculars for instruction in primary schools and Swahili and English in secondary schools. Although Swahili was taught in primary schools as a subject it was not considered important enough to be included as an examinable subject for the primary school leaving exam until the late 1980s. Another consequence of the language policy voiced by the experts is the need for local teachers to speak the vernacular of the particular area where they teach primary school students. Thereby, teachers were effectively restricted to work in their home provinces, since otherwise they would have to learn another vernacular to be able to teach. Weber (2009,p.18) highlight that experts who participated in his study stressed that Kenya's first President Kenyatta sometimes addressed the population in his mother tongue Kikuyu, even when people did not belong to the Kikuyu ethnic group and hence were not able to understand him.

When Moi took over after Kenyatta death, he enacted a quota system in the education system; this clearly has had detrimental effect of keeping people in ethnically homogeneous regions. In his study of the education system in Kenya, Weber reveals that in Moi's quota system '85 percent of a schools' students come from the school's local area and only 15 percent of the students admitted are allowed to come from outside the local area' (2009, p.20). The policy was given rhetoric of 'strengthening' local interest and commitment towards development and maintenance of their schools (Republic of Kenya 1988, p.29). The main reason for the introduction of the quota system is widely perceived to be President Moi's wish to increase secondary education for his people – the Kalenjin (Amutabi 2003) and indeed many provincial secondary schools in the Rift valley province including one in Moi's home - Moi high school Kabarak were built by Moi. Under President Kenyatta, the majority of schools were built in

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<sup>41</sup>In recent times, the liberalisation of the media in 2002 and the spread of vernacular radio stations, such as Inooro FM and Kameme FM (Kikuyu ethnic group), Kass FM (Kalenjin ethnic group), Ramogi FM (Luo ethnic group), is seen to pronounce the use of vernaculars and thereby to increase ethnic consciousness and animosity (Wamwere 2008,p.41). In the post-election period, these radio stations provided a platform for ethnicised hate-speeches and thereby crucially contributed to the ethnic sense of self and the ensuing violence experienced in 2008 (Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Dialogue Africa Foundation Trust 2009).

Central Province – home to the Kikuyu. The new schools built in the homeland of the Kalenjin, however, were then equally populated by other ethnic groups, who formerly went to schools in Central province. To increase access of his own people to secondary schools in their own province, Moi enacted the quota system. The quota system was indeed easy to apply in Kenya given that names identify people's ethnicity and was used to exclude members of other ethnic groups from attending schools outside their provinces. He thereby effectively prohibited that large numbers of people from other ethnic groups attended these secondary schools (Weber 2009, p.19-20). This had the consequence of reinforcing ethnic identity and regionalism, as we have already seen, and strikingly, in Kenya ethnicity is more prominent among the educated elite<sup>42</sup>. There is no doubt that in contemporary Kenya, as it were in the colonial state, ethnic identity continues to play a significant role in everyday life and in pursuing collective interests.

## **6.4 Ethnicity, Citizenship and the Nation-State**

Ethnic ideologies are in conflict with dominant nationalist ideologies because nationalist ideologies tend to promote cultural similarity and wide-ranging integration of all the inhabitants of the nation-state. In its most basic sense, ethnicity refers to the social reproduction of basic classificatory differences between categories of people and to aspects of gain and loss in social interaction. Ethnicity is fundamentally dual, encompassing aspects of both meaning and politics (Eriksen 1991). Here, I analyse the importance of ethnic identity in the formulation of ethnic citizenship and what this translates to in trying to reconstitute state citizenship in Kenya. I interrogate the ways in which ethnicity, as a symbol of political identity, clash with the state building project and nationalization of politics in Kenya. I try to understand the intricacies arising as a result of the development of two contradictory political systems (the state and ethnic group) present to the forging of nationalistic politics.

Ethnic identity is instrumental in shaping individual interests and actions in the modern Kenyan nation-state. For ethnic citizenship to exist, it must rest on evidence of 'identity, authority, and legitimacy' (Ndegwa 1997). The calculated rationality of ethnicity in groups with contradictory internal interests 'requires a symbolic identity of collective interests with an ethnic identity

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<sup>42</sup> These are often the political class who form political associations along ethnic lines, and persuade voters to vote along ethnic lines, they also instigate conflict and supply resources for ethnic clashes.

endowed with normative significance and emotive power that transcends other bases of solidarity or conflict' (Berman 1998,p.312). This is true if we agree with Charles Tilly that Ethnic groups are created where and when the members of at least two well-connected networks distinct by claimed origin and kinship start to compete for the same political and socioeconomic benefits and that this alliances are made as ethnic groups rather than 'castes, classes, or local communities to the extent that a) they coincide with systems of migration and b) members define their ties as those of kinship' (Tilly 1991, p.574). Tilly also observes that entire ethnic groups never autonomously mobilize or act collectively, but serve as bases for mobilization and collective action when the actions of outsiders either threaten to exclude them from shared and collectively-controlled opportunities or open up new resources to collective competition (1991,p.574). The work of ethnic mobilization is done by what Tilly (1991,p.575) calls 'ethnic entrepreneurs' - the political elite, who together with the mobilized members of a particular population make strong claims for control over autonomous states or subdivisions of states under two conditions:

1. When competitors begin to make claims for statehood that would exclude or subordinate the ethnic group in question
2. When the agents of a state to which the population is already subordinated begin to threaten
  - a) The group's distinctive identity or
  - b) Its shared access to advantageous niches' this would explain the ensuing events in early 1990

Ndegwa (1997,p.600) maintains, 'the difference between ethnic and nation-state citizenship lies in the Weberian legal, rational, and bureaucratic frameworks that uphold identity, legitimacy, and authority in the nation-state, as opposed to the social customs, social practices, and non-bureaucratic structures that define and uphold citizenship in ethnic groups'. Identity is vital both in ethnic and nation state spaces because it marks the boundaries of belonging (Ndegwa 1997, p. 601). Ethnic identity is socially constructed; these are aspects such as norms, values, language and so on. In Paglia's (2008, p.11) words, 'the attachment to another member of one's kinship is not just a function of interaction...it is because a certain ineffable significance is attributed to the tie of blood.' Being part of an ethnic community is often established by birth (or marriage or adoption) into a family and kin who consider themselves and are considered by others to belong to a community that believes in a shared history and values. Ethnic identity may be signified by

language or naming or maybe literally inscribed through rituals such as circumcision, and it is validated by the individual's participation in that community and by his or her interaction with the institutions of legitimate authority in the community (Ndegwa 1997, p.601-602).

In the post-colonial Kenyan state, the ethnic community is characterized by a 'moral economy' based on loyalty, patronage and reciprocity (Dafe 2009). This stems from the colonial legacy of a 'bifurcated state'; in an indirect despotism as was for Africans in colonial Kenya, the ethnics or natives did not have a direct access to the state except through their chiefs (Mamdani 1996a, 1996b, 2001). Patronage politics through the chiefs thus became the parochial channels of economic and political struggles. As Berman points out, 'the state in colonial Africa, in its context of capitalistic modernity became the central institutional force in the organization, production and distribution of social resources. It also shaped the accompanying changes in the social criteria of access to those resources, and the resulting social structural differentiation between individuals and communities' (Berman 1998, p.313).

The supremacy of ethnic nationalism over state nationalism in Kenya also stems from social segregation, a character of indirect despotism where the natives were not part of the civil society, but were organized like little states within the nation-state and legitimized by customary laws that were not universal to all communities. The Kikuyu had their own customary laws, so did the Luos, Kalenjins etc. Mamdani points out the colonial state took this a bit far, and asserted that '[e]ach ethnic group had to have its *own* law' (2001, p.655). 'The colonial state was from this point of view an ethnic federation, comprising so many native authorities, each defined ethnically, each native authority was like a local state under central supervision' (Mamdani 2001, p.655; also see *Citizen and Subject*, Mamdani 1996). African nations were not underpinned by culturally united ethnic communities, and this is essential in explaining their failure (Groves 2008). Mamdani (2001, p.655) poses the question, if decolonization meant getting rid of the colonial power from the central state, what should decolonization have meant in the local state? In Kenya, the local colonial judicial and legislative systems of chiefs still apply, and customary laws are recognized in state laws with these systems of colonial ethnic organization still in place, ethnicity becomes a more binding instrument of access to state power and resources than nationalistic bureaucratic channels.



The ethnic authority that defines the lives of many Kenyans in the postcolonial state is thus a continuation of social practice in ethnic arenas and is used by socially 'legitimated persons or structures, real or reinvented traditional authorities, ethnic associations, or charismatic leaders' such as chiefs, councillors and members of parliament who gain recognition from their ability to guarantee collective benefits by providing resources or a reputedly absolute memory (Ndegwa 1997). Kenyan politicians use the ethnic authority and manipulate its legitimacy, through channels of patronage and reciprocity to pursue 'ethnic collective goals' in the state arena. In addition, Ndegwa (1997, p.601) claim that the moral economy enables individuals in various contexts to rely on non-bureaucratic mutual aid networks and to reciprocate toward those who belong to a common society. That is, the people vote for their ethnic leaders in state elections and in turn the leaders are supposed to ensure economic resources and development trickles down to their respective community. Waweru writes, 'If moral ethnicity determines standards that one has to meet to be a member in good standing of a given ethnicity, some of those standards are now borrowed from the repertoire of political tribalism' (Waweru in Political Tribalism, Moral Ethnicity 22 January 2008).

In metropolitan locations such as in Kenya's capital, Nairobi, a moral economy is maintained through informal and formal ethnic associations and organizations that provide insurance for the welfare of members of that ethnic group; this insurance is normally in the form of funeral plans, health care, school fees and so on. Ndegwa highlights that ethnic loyalty and reciprocity include 'those better off helping relatives and clan members find jobs or pay school fees, as well as regular contributions to weddings and funerals, even for persons with whom face-to-face contact has never been established but who are imagined to belong to one's community' (1997,p.601). Ethnic solidarity within the nation-state arena is not a new phenomenon, but was in fact eminent in the metropolises of the colonial state. Throup (1985, p.318) observes:

New arrivals did not transcend their 'political' past, but sought out friends and relations to guide them in the alien environment. Men from neighbouring locations and districts, who spoke the same language, clung together in the new hostile world. Tribal solidarities were of crucial importance in Nairobi. Those already in employment housed and fed their associates, helped them find jobs and establish themselves. When a Nairobi African became unemployed, fell ill or died, he was looked after by friends from his location or district. Whatever the Administration or African, he the African elite believed, for most ties of kinship and locality were as important in the alien world of Nairobi as they were in the Reserves.

That is why it does not happen as a surprise that cabinet ministers in Kenya direct development schemes and government projects to their ethnic constituencies. Throup (1993) highlights that in the 1980s, two Kikuyu Cabinet Ministers under President Moi, Arthur Magugu in Githunguri and George Muhoho in neighbouring Juja, were known for using their cabinet positions in the government to secure development in their constituencies. As the Minister of Transport Magugu secured the construction many roads in the area, while as Minister of Water Development Muhoho oversaw the massive Juja water development scheme<sup>43</sup> (Throup 1993, p.377). Indeed ‘Kenyans have continued to judge the performance of their parliamentarians by their capacity to bring “pork” back to their constituencies’ (Throup 1993, p.378).

The political elites collaborate with cultural intermediaries such as chiefs and religious leaders in using cultural identity for political manoeuvre. Ethnicity becomes an apparatus employed by elitist groups in the society to pursue economic and political interests (Tarimo 2000). In Kenya ethnic nationalism threatens state national patriotism as political elites increasingly mobilize citizens to participate in the political and electoral processes along ethnic lines. Politicized ethnicity serves to move the field of action of an ethnic community from purely cultural and social spheres to that of economic and political interests. By appealing to ethnic loyalties and affinities political leaders urge people to keep allegiance to those who represent ethnic interests (Tarimo 2000). This method of persuading people to support politicians is similar to the traditional methods of obeying and supporting a chief (Tarimo 2000). Mamdani (1996, p.147) points that in the colonial state ‘the authority of the chief thus fused in a single person all moments of power: judicial, legislative, executive, and administrative. The authority was like a clenched fist, necessary because the chief stood at the intersection of the market and the nonmarket economy’. Berman highlights further that Patron-client networks remain the fundamental state-society linkage in conditions of social crisis and uncertainty and have extended to the very centre of the state. This explains accounts for what Berman (1998, p.305) identifies as the ‘personalistic, materialistic and opportunistic character of African politics’, and what Bayart (1993) refers to as *The Politics of the Belly*. For Berman once again, ‘[s]uch networks also penetrate institutions of civil society and liberal democracy, undermining programmes of socio-economic and political reform’ (Berman 1998, p.305). Kenya’s civil

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<sup>43</sup> Juja Water and Sewerage Company (RUJWASCO) is a Water Services Provider that provides water and sewerage services in Ruiru and Juja Constituencies in the Kiambu County.

society has had the challenge of remaining neutral to the state; there is a tendency for leaders of civil society groups to be co-opted into the government. A case in point is, following the highly contested 2007 elections, the government took a deliberate move to neutralize the civil society by incorporate some of the most vocal and committed civil society leaders into government (Wanyande, 2009). Njoki Ndungu who was nominated to parliament and John Githongo of Transparency International - Kenya Chapter were appointed Permanent Secretary and presidential advisor on matters of governance and corruption (Wanyande 2009, p 16)

Clearly, we cannot deny that ethnic sub-national politics collides with the totalizing and homogenizing aspects of state nationalism and state formation (Alonso 1994). The difficulty as we have established lies in the colonial legacy of ‘decentralized despotism’ on the one hand and ‘centralized despotism’ on the other (Mamdani 1996,p. 147) which defined the economic and political rules of engagement for the subjects; restricting their sphere of political and economic participation to parochial communities. Berman (1998, p.313) asserts that:

by authoritatively defining rules of behaviour that specified for Africans what was required, prohibited and permitted, the colonial state structured the choices of individuals by constructing social, economic and political situations; assigning individual roles and identities; and defining the choice of goals, strategies and behaviours.

The state thus defined the social spheres in which ethnicity was or was not relevant, and shaped the choices of political agencies with regard to both ‘the ascriptive markers of ethnicity and the organizational forms in which it was expressed’ (Berman 1998, p.313).

In the postcolonial African state, national identity is lawfully bounded (Mamdani 2001), conferred on all those born or naturalized within the fixed arbitrary borders. An individual’s claim to nationality is validated in the public sphere by ‘legal and bureaucratic instruments’, such as identity cards, passports, and voting cards. On the other hand, ethnic identity rests on a socially constructed definition of belonging (Ndegwa 1997, p.60). The difficulty of reconciling ethnic identity and nationalism (the identity that links the individual to the state)<sup>44</sup> lies on the ideologies (Eriksen 1991) of legitimization of ethnic citizenship and national citizenship which are shifting identities that require individuals to change roles depending on the sphere of practice they find themselves; each citizenship provides a different experience and requires divergent

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<sup>44</sup> I am aware of the different arguments about the ethnic origin of nationalism. However, I am using the word nationalism here in the way it was constructed within the African context – aspiration to forge and control own state.

responsibilities. 'From the citizen's point of view, nationalism may or may not be a viable alternative to kinship or ethnic ideology (or there may be two nationalisms to choose between' for example, in this case being a Kenyan or a Luo, whichever best meets her particular needs will be her option, be they of a 'metaphysical, economic or political nature' (Eriksen 1991, p.268). This is because African solidarity and communalism defines their perception of 'self-interest and their location in the social whole' (Ake 1994, P.243).

We can clearly see that 'illiberal', republican citizenship within ethnic groups undermine the 'liberal' citizenship assumed in the national sphere. This, Ndegwa (1997) points, is the case in two ways: one, the agency of an individual citizen in the national space; that is, their aims and ambitions is informed, formed and revised by their experiential life in parochial communities. Hence, communal or ethno-regional obligations affects one's individual preferences in the nation-state arena, given that collective responsibilities are more 'effectively enforced' in the ethnic community (Ndegwa 1997). Two, individuals experience liberal citizenship demands at the national level, which they may or may not find consistent with (or advantageous to) civic-republican demands within ethnic communities (Ndegwa 1997). The attitude for many Kenyan political elite is thus astutely captured in Southall (1988) article title: 'Small Urban Centers in Rural Development: What Else is Development Other Than Helping Your Own Hometown?' This is particularly so when one ethnic group in competition with others emerges as hegemonic (Ndegwa 1997). This would also explain the apparent coalition of various ethnic groups against Kikuyu domination in Kenya in the 2007 elections.

A clear example of the existing ideological conflict between ethnic citizenship and nation-state citizenship is in the labour markets of many African countries (Eriksen 1991). An ideology of ethnic solidarity that characterizes Kenyan ethnic communities asserts, 'employment should normally be provided by members of the extended lineage (or the ethnic)' (Eriksen 1991). Indeed a look of the reality of recruitment to state appointments or public service reflects gross discrimination based on tribal ties. Appointments to public service are 'largely made according to the wishes of political leaders' (Chabal and Daloz 1999, p.6). Every civil servant's social responsibility is first to members of their ethnic group. 'Once members of a particular ethnic group gain access to state resources, they use their position to find jobs for their fellow members'

(Hameso 1997, p.95). We see that resources are allocated through of patronage/clientist channels rather than modes of professionalism and competence based on merit.

In the Weberian nationalist ideology, employment is based on meritocracy and impersonal criteria (Eriksen 1991); every citizen has a fair chance of employment as long as they have the necessary formal qualifications, regardless of the personal relationship between ‘employer and applicant’. This democratic and bureaucratic ideology of access to resources in the national sphere is contradictory to kinship ideologies of ‘communal use’ or ‘sharing’ rooted in ethnic communities. Here, we see that ethnic mobilization does not only derive its explanation and legitimacy from the colonial legacies, but it is also an ethnic strategy for economic rationality. Patronage politics that characterizes ethnic communities is also legitimized by the centralization of power in nationalistic politics, ‘the fact that economic resources are centralized by the state means that each group fights its way represented by its ethnic spokesman to improve its collective welfare’ (Hameso 1997,p.96). Nation state legitimacy is therefore undermined by the ethnicity as long as the state fails to satisfy the political and economic needs of every citizen. In instances of economic marginalization of the masses, ethnic mobilization and its manipulation are not only necessary but also ‘valid’. Many Africans do not perceive helping a relative or fellow ethnic member to get a job as nepotism; they view it as an obligation (Lamb 1984). Thus, ‘political power becomes necessary for economic survival and ethnicity becomes the key to open both’ (Hameso 1997, p.97). In this section, I sought to highlight that ethnicity, rather ethnic political identity, has left the Kenyan experiment with democratization and nation-building rather unstable and frail, simply because the subnational identities are finding more salience and strength in the competition for resources and state power. Ethnic formation, as a result, has become more prominent and pronounced, undermining the autonomy of the state and its domination over social and political life citizens.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

Ethnic propaganda and ethnic stereotypes in the negative remain a strong political force in the mobilization of political support from members and allies of one’s ethnic. They are expressed both implicitly and explicitly in political campaigns, public meetings and through vernacular radio. We know that stereotypes are very useful in creating; reproducing and or maintaining

social prejudice against other social groups. In Kenya they are used to align members' representations, interpretations and meaning with that of the political elite thereby giving these politicians advantage within the group or political alliance of ethnic groups. Ethnic speeches of hatred played a crucial role in the 2008 post-election violence in Kenya and have been identified as a dangerous stimulus for interethnic violent conflict. One cannot deny the role of political discourse as an important element of the struggle for power.

What is evident is that the persistent ethnic ideologies in Kenya are in conflict with the aspiration to nationalist ideologies. Nationalist ideologies tend to promote cultural similarity and wide-ranging integration of all the inhabitants of the nation-state, yet the nation state in Kenya was not forged as unifying body but as a political entity that did not encourage the incorporation of Kenyans into the state as individuals (citizens) but encouraged their participation within the wider political economy as collectives of ethnic groups. One thing is for sure, the uprisings and protests that characterise post-election scenarios in Kenya are often a revolt against the state and those who are running it; this, however, finds its expression in ethnic forms.

Although almost every Kenyan would be quick to stress that they are not tribal, their social actions and choice of leaders or political affiliations, political sentiments and discourses point to the significance of ethnic or tribal identity not only as a political force in electoral politics but also as a narrative that explains their everyday plights. Political rhetoric in Kenya seem to suggest that one is well off because one of "their own" is in a leadership position or that one's plight; poverty or misery is arising from the marginalisation of one's ethnic group from access to state power and resources. This is a pointer to the importance of ethnicity in national politics in Kenya; and how ethnicized narratives are deployed in resolving political contest supposedly within a democratic framework. These ethnicised conflicts are in reality about wealth and the disproportionate redistribution of and access to resources after independence, especially land. Kenyatta did not address land concerns in that after independence and the exit of white settlers; he failed to give the land back to the rightful owners. The implantation of the 'Swynnerton Plan' was disproportionate and mainly benefitted Kikuyus (Kenyatta's tribesmen). Part of the land in question previously belonged to the Kalenjin and the Maasai, especially farmland in the Rift valley. Moreover, other Kikuyus who also lost their land and were not beneficiaries of the land redistribution exercise were resettled in formerly predominantly Kalenjin and Coastal areas,

something that continues to breed ethnic animosities between the Kikuyu and Kalenjins as well as with the Coastal communities. Underneath all the ethnic conflicts are grievances about access to resources; political leaders have not fostered a sense of unity by promoting equitable access to public resources for all Kenyans, Kenyatta channelled public wealth to Kikuyus, Moi channelled public wealth to Kalenjins and cabinet ministers continue to direct development schemes and government projects to their constituencies, the cycle continues.

Many have grappled with the possibilities of eradicating these forms from the state-formation in Africa. For Mamdani, it is clearly located in establishing shared citizenship. For Ali Mazrui (2002), this is located in asserting class consciousness, and he holds that the prospects for socialism in post-independent Africa at first looked hopeful, but this was not to be, and that the difficulty lay in the 'primacy of ethnicity in Africa over class consciousness. Most Africans are members of their ethnic group first and members of a particular social class second' (Mazrui 2002, quoted in Hugo *et al* 2002, p.11-13). What this means is that whenever there has been a confrontation and competition between the forces of ethnicity on the one side, and the forces of class consciousness on the other side, ethnicity has almost always triumphed in Africa. It is a known fact that Kenya never adopted a socialist project, let alone managed to create any form of shared class consciousness nor adopted any form of socialism. It has not managed to create shared citizenship (real or perceived by the ordinary individuals) either, as Mamdani hoped would be the case and this chapter touched on these concerns. The next chapter, by way of concluding the dissertation, raises these concerns in relation to Kenya's democratisation project.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Ethnicity and Democratization in Kenya

#### 7.1 Introduction

Democracy, narrowly defined, is an ‘expansion of political freedom’ (Barro 1999, p.158) in the public or state sphere and creating channels of multi-party elections. Bradley contends that democracy is a configuration of governance moulded by the general values, biases, and nuances of a given culture and that conceptually, ‘democracy is a system of government that allows the citizens to decide its desires and necessities via free, fair, and periodic multiparty elections’ (2002,p.407). As I noted earlier, the immediate post-independence Kenya was a *de facto* one party state.

When Moi ascended into power, he embarked on a plan to replace cleverly the existing Kikuyu political elite with his own locally less popular but more loyal supporters from the former KADU. These mainly comprised people from his own Kalenjin ethnic group (a collection of eight groups living closely in the Rift Valley and created into a singular political tribe by Moi and others in 1950s. During Moi tenure, the level of Kalenjin elite’s control over the private economy (which had previously concentrated in foreign, Asian and Kikuyu hands) increased steadily. This transfer of wealth for patronage ‘increasingly required the use of political power to wrestle control of private assets from those who had them’ (Orvis 2001, p.9). The increasing difficulties arising from the economic shocks of the global economy, however, resulted in economic stagnation from the mid-1980s forward. With the inability to adequately generate patronage for his supporters, Moi’s reaction was to centralize control, creating further deterioration in the political and economic environment in the country (Orvis 2001, p.9). In 1982, in rural areas:

the bottom 20 per cent of the population received 4.9 per cent of the income while the top 20 per cent received 56.9 per cent. By 1992 the distribution was 3.5 per cent and 60.2 per cent respectively. The poorest 20 per cent were even worse off in the urban areas in 1992, where the



lowest 20 per cent received 2.9 per cent and [the top] 20 per cent received 58.8 per cent.<sup>30</sup> (Holmquist and Ford, 1998, p.232)

The rising economic challenges and marginalization of a significant proportion of Kenyans from meaningful economic participation fuelled the political democracy movement leading to the eventual adoption of a multi-party political system.

## **7.2 Democratization in Kenya**

Kenya's democratization project began in the 1980s, this was characterized by underground political movements seeking a political revolution, culminating into the failed coup attempt of 1982 that was led by the Kenyan Air Force and 'seen by many Kenyans as an attempt at a Luo power grab' (Orvis, 2001, p.9). Those suspected to have plotted the coup, including key politicians like Raila Odinga, were put in detention by Moi's regime (1978-2002). This however, did little to stop the protests and agitation by the populace and top politicians for an end to the one party state. However, Moi adamantly refused to open the space for political participation saying that multipartyism would plunge the country's various ethnic groups into ethnic rivalries. Meanwhile, international donors also began pushing for political and economic reforms in Kenya, forcing Moi to succumb to donor pressure. According to Brown (2001,p.726), 'on 26 November 1991, at their Consultative Group meeting in Paris, donors collectively decided to suspend new aid to Kenya amounting to \$350 million, until corruption had been curbed and the political system liberalized. Within weeks, Moi amended the constitution to legalise the formation of opposition parties' (see also Holmquist and Ford, 1998).

Clearly the legalisation of opposition parties in December 1991 by Moi regime was largely a reaction to donors' suspension of financial assistance. Moi went ahead to put measures in place to ensure that he was still going to stay in power. Notably, Moi only cancelled the single-party provision of the constitution, leaving intact and at his disposal the entire repressive state machinery. Despite donor's awareness of this, they did not do much to avert the situation. Before the 1992 elections militias attacked members of ethnic groups associated with the opposition, mostly the Kikuyu, Luo and Luhya in several KANU-dominated areas, mainly in the Rift Valley. Government officials were on the forefront advocating for the 'expulsion of non-autochthonous ethnicities from the 'KANU zone' (Brown, 2001, p.73). The 1992 political clashes in the Rift

valley province, Moi's home turf were indeed traced to the government, including indications that militias had been armed, trained and coordinated by KANU officials, with the goal of consolidating their declared 'KANU zone'. An estimated 75-100% of upcountry people were displaced in the areas directly affected by the attacks. In the North Province, comprised of a minority population, allegations have been made that KANU was also actively inciting violence'. Brown further asserts that there is proof that state officials supplied weapons and paid attackers per house burned and person killed, and that KANU leaders trained militias' in special camps. The phenomenon of ethnic "clashes" and elections in Kenya has received a detailed analysis in Klopp (2001) *"Ethnic Clashes" and Winning Elections: The Case of Kenya's Electoral Despotism*. In analysing the 1992 elections, Klopp (2001) confirms that the timing of the "clashes" that is, immediately before the 1992 multi-party elections and the deliberate failure of government officials to stop the killing of non Kalenjins in the region suggests that the violence was part of a strategy to counter the onset of political liberalization in Kenya.

Ethnic clashes in Kenya intensified in the period 1991-1994 and then continued sporadically, in the Rift Valley. This was meant to punish and intimidate those not showing political support for Moi's rule. Non-Kalenjins were forcefully removed from the Rift Valley region. The cleansing not only removed presumed anti-Moi communities labelled *madoadoo* (stains) and anti-KANU voters from the region but also made their land available for others to occupy (Klopp 2001). Again between August and early October 1997, approximately seventy-five people were killed in the Coast Province and 40,000 left their homes following well-organized attacks against upcountry people (Holmquist and Ford, 1998, p.229). The locus of responsibility for these attacks remains unclear but may be national, local, or both.

Therefore, it is not far-fetched to conclude that the adoption of multiparty electoral competition did not bring about meaningful transition of the existing authoritarian political system. It has been noted that the legal system remained compatible with authoritarian rule, with the dominant laws and restrictions serving the interests of president Moi, characterized by the detention of persons without trial. Moreover, the requirement for government licensing of public meetings and registration of political parties, accorded chiefs and provincial administrations extremely broad authority, and barred the opposition from equal access to state-run electronic media (Klopp 2001). Moi "won" the 1992 and 1997 elections despite his increasing unpopularity with most

Kenyans. There were also allegations of vote buying; it is alleged that in 1992, an estimated \$60 million was spent on vote-buying alone (Brown 2000, p.726). There was also an observation of outright electoral statistical discrepancies, for example evidence of voter turnouts exceeding 100% and eyewitness accounts of systematic rigging in key constituencies (Brown 2000, p.726-728). Despotism strategies also included harassment of the opposition and instigation of ethnic clashes. These produced a double-edged sword effect; facilitating KANU and Moi's "win", while at the same time fulfilling, albeit in a sinister manner, his ground assessment and insistence that multipartyism was bound to intensify ethnic clashes. Brown (2001,p.726) confirms that 'part of the reason Moi and KANU won both elections was that they engineered and benefited from grossly unjust conditions during the campaign and fraudulent practices related to the count.' It was also noted that Moi appointed the members of the electoral commission, and also that constituencies had been increased in KANU zones to maximize KANU's representation in parliament (Foeken and Dietz 2000). The calculation was that a parliament in which KANU had the majority legislatures would give it the advantage of tyranny of numbers and shield it from unfavourable legislation by the opposition.

Moreover, in the push towards democracy, the plight of Kenyans was made worse by the international community whose involvement in Kenya's politics was lopsided towards their interests at the expense of the expanding concerns of the suffering Kenyan population. Despite the political difficulties faced by the opposition as a result of the hostile political climate leading to the elections, donors went ahead and endorsed the results. Donor actions were driven by two important factors. One, in the aftermath of contested election practices and results, and faced with the possibility of a political revolution that would have destabilised the country, and hence the region, donors' primary concern was to avoid any situation that could lead to a 'breakdown of the political and economic order, even if this meant legitimising and prolonging the regime's authoritarian rule' (Brown, 2001, p.726). Two, having spent a total of about \$2.1 million on the 1992 elections, donors' main concern was to see them take place, even under grossly sub-optimal conditions' (Brown, 2001, p.732). They failed to prolong and deepen their engagement to promote any significant institutional reforms in the country. They knowingly kept 'endorsing unfair elections (including suppressing evidence of their illegitimacy) and subverting domestic efforts to secure far-reaching reforms' (Brown 2001, p.725). Clearly, the equation of multiparty elections to democratisation has perhaps been the most detrimental aspect of the democratic

project in Kenya. The occurrences of elections in Kenya not only points to the inefficiency of Western involvement in domestic politics, but also to the bitter fact that in the face of conflicting agendas, that is, those of local populations and donor countries, donors sought to pursue their interests.

The push for democratization as a conditionality for financial assistance forced African governments to privatize their despotic machinery. There is a great correlation between donor-induced democratization and the rise of militias and state-sponsored ethnic violence (Roessler, 2005). What has emerged clearly is that external donor pressure had ‘interactive and mediating effects on domestic politics in African states in the early 1990s’ (Roessler, 2005, p.207). But this did not lead to democratization but privatized state violence. Roessler theorises further that when ‘political conditionalities converged and interacted with domestic political threats (for example, massive opposition protests and rebel insurgencies), it caused some governments, particularly those that had previously politicized ethnicity and mobilized groups along ethnic lines, to privatize their coercive strategies’ (2005,p.207). For Moi, there was no choice but to implement political “reforms” albeit on the surface just to please the donors, but the reality is that the political system became more repressive. Roessler writes, ‘[b]locking the democratization process was impossible in highly dependent regimes like Kenya and Malawi, where the resumption of foreign aid flows was contingent upon the holding of multiparty elections’ (Roessler 2005,p.211). To win both ways, Moi opted to modify the mode of his authoritarianism within a misleading notion of electoral democracy. Here, we see failure by Western agencies to improve the political situation in Kenya especially if we agree with Mamdani (1992) that multipartism does not necessarily transform political systems.

The 2007 elections were not different, during Kibaki’s tenure (2002-2013) and particularly towards the 2007 elections; ethnic communities associated with the opposition were harassed and attacked by a group of Kikuyu militia called *Mungiki* (Amutabi 2009). The 2007-2008 post-election violence broke out because of a great suspicion by most Kenyans that Kibaki had rigged the vote. The international community observers also concluded that that Kibaki did not win the 2007 elections, yet he was sworn in for another term in office (US International Republican Institute 2008, EU Election Observation Mission 2008). Apart from the reported electoral

malpractices, the released election results did not match the ethnicised voting patterns and ethnic demographics in the country. Kibaki had his major support only from his Kikuyu community. According to findings by Gallup done about six months after the highly contested presidential elections in Kenya, ‘a majority of Kenyans (70%) told Gallup they thought the election was dishonest. As Kenyans, along with the rest of the world, heard reports of irregularities during the electoral process, including vote-buying, ballot stuffing, and data tallying issues and delays in reporting the results, such a finding is not surprising’ (Gallup 2008). This manipulation and control of the democratic space by political leaders is borrowed from colonial authoritarian tactics and failure on the part of European colonialists to invest in ‘civil apparatus of infrastructure development, social services and macro-management’ which could have enabled a full transformation of Kenyan communities and their integration into the state and beyond sufficiently (Berman 1998, p.314).

There is no doubt that multipartyism as a key aspect of democracy has turned Kenya into a ‘paradigmatic case’ of Richard Joseph’s ‘virtual democracy’ (Orvis 2001, p. 9). Indeed the internal and external pressure by donors for African countries to adopt multipartyism as the key measure of democratization has had the effect of turning the authoritarian pre-democracy government systems into ‘privatized state violence’ systems within the supposed electoral democracies; it become a matter of new game, old rules. Voting along ethnic lines and election violence in Kenya in 1992, 1997, 2007 and 2013 point to the exploitation of ethnic differences by the political elite for personal political scores (Orvis 2001, Brown 2002). Many scholars looking at the performance of democracy through the ideology and practice of democracy are of the view that democracy has failed in Kenya. It has been observed that in Kenya, ‘political institutions and the whole concept of governance remains stuck in the dictatorial quagmire of the past’, characterized by a lack of popular participation in decision making processes and the absence of consensus around important issues of governance and resource allocation (Ajulu 1998,p.278). Approximately two decades and five elections down the line it is quite clear that the democratization project in Kenya is still just an aspiration, why is this the case? In the following section I raise some of the deep-seated challenges to the democratization project in Kenya.

### **7.3 The Deep-seated Challenges to Democratic Politics in Kenya**

Democracy is not an alien concept to Africans. Pre-modern African societies were some of the most democratic systems in the world (Ake 1993, Bradley 2005, Mamdani 1984). Intra communal African traditional systems were able to promoting peace and coexistence of individuals through decentralized participatory democracies. Life was communal. This communalism was based on the belief that ‘without cooperation, there was little chance of survival, without equality, little possibility of co-operation’ (Mamdani 1984, p.1046). Social life was centred on kinship, and relationships between individuals were one on one. Leaders were ‘democratically elected and democratically deposed’ (Mamdani 1984, p.1046), in fact in most African communities, leadership comprised council of elders. There was no room for tyranny because there were no machineries of repression at hand, no soldiers set apart from the people, no police, no prisons, no courts, and no distinct administrative unit (Mamdani 1984). Moreover, given that there was no state, solidarity of people only to kin group, and hostility was therefore between tribes. These perceptions of primordial socio-cultural ties remain an important aspect of societal organization in contemporary Africa. So how is it that these communities that were inherently democratic found it hard to maintain values of democracy within the framework of the nation-state?

For Bradley (2005), the challenge of democratisation in Africa is to be found in the difference of conceptualization of democracy; that is, the difference in how the West and Africans define democracy. Traditional African political systems were constructed with democratic values, such as ‘patrimony and communalism’, a strong emphasis on participation, and standards of accountability. Chiefs were held accountable for their own actions as well as for the ‘natural catastrophes such as famine, epidemics, floods, and drought’ (Ake 1991, p.34). Liberal democracy on the other hand promotes bureaucratic channels of accountability and legitimacy; that is to say that leadership is not established through consensus but through channels of representation using the ballot. Citizens in Western countries therefore naturally identify with the state as ‘reflecting the desires of the electorate’ (Bradley 2005, p.407). In Africa, however, it is the ethnic community that is perceived to reflect the interests of the people. Thus, in African infant democracies like Kenya, political parties are formed to respond to a ‘political rather than socioeconomic change’ (Bradley 2005, p.408). This important difference means that interests are not constitutively linked to any specific organized social group for example, like the civil

society. Mobilisation of the masses centres on ethnic ties and religious linkages; here, identity is primarily reflected in one's communal adaptations and traditions (Bradley 2005). Given that there is often a large diversity of ethnic groups in African countries; the state's understanding of governance is not always harmonious with that of the heterogeneous peoples it is governing. Each ethnic group has a particular view of "governance" and perceptions of how the everyday is managed and should be like, informed by issues of interest to them. Such ideological contradictions are reflected at the local, national and state levels.

Moreover, in advancing the principles of Western style democracy, we find that they are in conflict with the principles of African forms of democracy. African democracies appear to promote collective rights and responsibilities, while Western forms of democracy prop-up individual civic and political rights. Bradley writes, 'Western democracies [.....] limit the "democratic playing field"' as well as limit 'cooperative, lasting relationships with "the other"' (Bradley 2005, p.407). This makes African democracy unique. Whereas liberal democracy assumes individualism, individualism does not appear to characterize the African mode of living, except in the urban centres (Ake 1993). In this context, political parties of liberal democracy cannot make sense; communal or group interests remain essentially important. It is therefore problematic to 'assume that political parties are the appropriate mechanism for political competition under such conditions' (Ake 1993, p.243). As long as a socio-cultural ideology remains at the centre of economic and political participation, liberal democracy remains a foreign concept in Africa.

As I have already alluded to, democracy is not a foreign concept to Africans, but the practice democracy that is often advanced by the West seems to be in conflict with Africans ways of social life and organization. Mamdani (1992) agrees that a disturbing feature of African politics is getting remedies from a context other than the one that gave rise to its problems. Mamdani points out, 'Whereas the source of demands is the existing African context, the framework for solutions is generally a received theory of democracy which has little to do with contemporary realities in Africa' (1992, p.2228). In confirming this point, Bradley (2005) also asserts that Africa's democratic experiments and the West's view of how Africa should go about democratizing are usually firmly rooted in the credence that Africa's economic marginalization

hinders its democratic aspirations. But Africans are of the view that the lack of democracy in the modern African states like Kenya is what hinders development (Ake, 1993). Clearly, the uniqueness of African democracy is that it 'reflects the socio-cultural realities of Africa, liberal democracy which pretends to universalism is historically specific' (Ake, 1993, p.242).

Ajulu's analysis is that the political crisis and obstacles to democratization in Kenya, calls for a close attention to the character of the postcolonial state, 'predominantly its forms of accumulation over the last thirty years or so, and the character of the class forces which have traditionally controlled it' (1998,p.278, p.279). This analysis is based on the assumption that 'politics is about the conscious processes of sorting out contestation over resources, cooperation and negotiations in the use, production and distribution of resources, and the inevitable disputes arising from calculations about winners and loser'. Ajulu (1998) consents with Berman (1998) that in Kenya, political and economic processes have historically been regulated by authoritarian means or colonial despotism. Ethnic competition arises, because whoever is in power rules with an iron fist, supporting his people and excluding 'the other'. This is more so because of the centrality of the state in economic activity and particularly, the role of the state as the 'driver' of the accumulation process. The state posits itself as the 'most important dispenser of patronage and resources', and this means that the control of the state or closeness to those who have access to the state becomes the main obsession of politics (Ajulu 1998, p.278). This is because the state is already characterized by horizontal inequalities and high levels of 'extra-economic coercion', (Ajulu 1998, p.278-279).

It is clear that the distortion and destruction of political and socioeconomic forms of organization and the subsequent introduction of European autocracy had lingering effect on the development of democratic structures and institutions in the African state (Mamdani 1996, 2001). Contemporary Kenya is still characterized and governed by both indigenous and Western ideologies and practices, depending on the social sphere one is operating in. Despite the "modernization" project, 'colonialism in Africa did not reproduce the full range of European institutions and culture; rather, it introduced partial and extremely skewed representations of Europe not only through the state, but also through the missions, merchant capital, and even settler communities' (Berman, 1998,p.312-315). And that what was clearly reproduced by the



colonial states were the bureaucratic institutions of political domination; the tyrannical apparatus that were used to govern ethnically segregated regions. This became the model of practice for Kenyan political leaders especially during the Kenyatta and Moi tenures; that used the apparatuses of bureaucratic authoritarianism to cling to power, through undemocratic channels that involved manipulating the political system.

With ethnicity being the primary criteria for inclusion and exclusion to state power and public resources, bureaucratic totalitarianism and hostilities have often directed at the opposing factions who by default are often leaders/representatives of other ethnic communities. This state of affairs was a character of competitive politics in Kenya as early as the immediate post-independence period. Omolo (2007), a political commentator, highlights that during the 1969 general election, those who stood against Kenyatta, like Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, were rotting in detention camps, and that immediately after the 1974 general elections another promising politician J.M Kariuki KANU MP for Nyandarua North and the fiercest critics of Kenyatta's dictatorial government was brutally murdered in the Ngong forest in March 1975. An accusing finger was pointed out at Kenyatta's close political associates. This led to the appointment of a committee of inquiry by parliament, chaired by the late Elijah Mwangale, to investigate the circumstances of J.Ms death. Omolo highlights that the committee came out with an incriminating report, pointing an accusing finger to certain personalities within the government. But Kenyatta adamantly refused to implement its recommendations instead cabinet member Muliro who had rebelled in favour of the committee was fired from the cabinet. Similarly in 1990, John Robert Ouko the Kenya's Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation was brutally murdered in mysterious circumstances during Moi's authoritarian regime. Ouko's killing severely damaged Moi's administration credibility and created permanent suspicion and permanent scar between the Luo community and Moi's administration (Omolo 2007).

Another limiting factor of "Western democracy" is that it tends to concentrate on the development or socioeconomic conditions as opposed to socio-political reforms. Clearly, it has been noted that 'state structures, policy practices, and levels of education' are the ideal elements for nation-states to at least have a possible chance at attaining complete democracy. On the other hand, poverty, high illiteracy rates, and an entrenched hierarchical social structure are considered

to be antithetical for the functioning of democracy' (Bradley 2005). This view informs democratic efforts in Kenya and Most African States, where pursuing economic growth takes precedence over the development of political structures. But without first entrenching political reforms, competition, inclusion and exclusion in the capitalist structures take ethnic forms. Given that the push for democracy in Kenya was partly from the international financial institutions, there is a tendency for authoritarian regimes in Africa to maintain bilateral and multilateral economic collaboration with the West as long as they get the economics right. As I have already highlighted citing Brown (2001), after the 1992 elections, donors did not place much emphasis on political change, as long as an environment of political and economic stability was possible under Moi's authoritarian rule. 'Before long, Moi took a few macroeconomic measures that pleased donors and made some (not particularly credible) promises for future compliance' (Brown 2001, p.732).

African politicians are power hungry rational actors; although their actions and behaviour may be restrained by international and domestic structures, they often tend to resort to subversive and repressive activities (Roessler, 2005). Political occurrences in both 1992 and 1997 in Kenya show that government implementation of 'democracy' only equated to the adoption of multiparty election system, in which the state controls and manipulates the political processes. It has been observed that '[t]he government neither made nor allowed any steps in the pursuit of democratization, other than holding by-elections as required' (Brown 2001,p.726). The government also backslid on some aspects of the political liberalization; among other things, it harassed opposition party activists, arrested dozens of opposition MPs, passed new legislation to silence the press, closed opposition magazines, charged journalists with sedition for reporting anti-government stories, and increased its pressure on critical NGOs'

Similarly, Western instruments of democratization such as the need for political parties are only useful in polarizing ethnic identities. In the African context of a nation state, which involves the integration of different exclusive ethnic groups into one political unit, ethnic dissimilarities has found its major stimulus from the introduction of competitive politics. Miguel (2004, p.331) asserts that 'the first two post-independence presidents, Kenyatta and Daniel Arap Moi, are perceived within Kenya as 'tribalists,' political opportunists who thrived on the politics of ethnic

division. Ethnicity has become the primary cleavage of political life in Kenya, as it is in many other African countries. The Political elite use state resources to feed their self-enrichment activities. Ethnic politics in Kenya has contributed to its poor economic performance, as a result of patronage activities that have bred uncontrolled growth of corruption, political instability and poor bureaucratic and institutional performance. Elections results tend to look like a census of the different ethnic groups, as Kenyans cast votes along ethnic lines, dispute over election results therefore means interethnic dispute resulting to violent conflict. This forces us to question the tenability of liberalized democracy.

Furthermore, the political elites in Kenya are also the catalysts of disunity in the country as they aspire to shape political parties, their leadership, composition, association, and voting behaviour, along ethnic lines. All political coalitions in Kenya have been characterized by ethnic forms and mobilization, and this works against the political integration of the people. For instance, the initial movement for change, the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (FORD) was apolitical umbrella that united major Kikuyu, Luo, and Luhya leaders. When Moi succumbed to pressure to allow Multipartyism, Mwai Kibaki defected from FORD and formed his own political party the Democratic Party (DP) which became the second opposition party. Within FORD, Odinga and Matiba could not agree on who would carry the banner as the presidential candidate, resulting in a split. With the split Odinga's FORD-Kenya became a predominantly Luo party, but with the support of a faction of the Luhya community and a faction from the Coast under the banned Islamic Party of Kenya. With two Kikuyu candidates, Matiba's FORD-Asili came to represent the Kikuyu in the southern half of Central province, as well as in the cities of Nairobi and Nakuru, and a section of the Luhya as well as while Kibaki's DP.

Political leaders are often at the forefront preaching ethnic division and instigating ethnic cleansing of other ethnic groups. If leaders are not unified then the people cannot be unified. According to Miguel, the success of political integration of different ethnic groups in Tanzania is based on leadership and unity of the ruling elite. He points out that a more promising approach to attaining this is 'promoting dialogue and interaction among the leaders of distinct ethnic communities, who are then better able to coordinate responses to violations of intergroup cooperation norms' (2004,p.330). The election violence in Kenya in 1992, 1997, 2007 point to

use of ethnic difference by the political elite to promote ethnic division for personal political scores (Orvis 2001, Brown 2002). This has been a major blow to the political integration of Kenyans. Ake points out that ‘democratic diffusion of power presupposes the existence of internalized and institutionalized restraints potent enough to prevent the different pockets of power from destroying one another (and the state) through uninhibited self-assertiveness’ (1967, p.489). Thus far, the political elites in Kenya, instead of building institutions of unity, they are derailing development of a unifying political culture. It is evident then Kenyan leaders in the post-independence nation-state have failed to promote social transformation. I do not think anyone in the elite circle in Kenya heeded Ake (1967, p.488), who points out that ‘the leaders of the new state must not only concentrate power in their own hands, they must also ‘further’ social transformation.’

## **7.4 Conclusion**

Kenya’s experiment with multiparty democracy has not led to the transformation of the political system. The initial adoption of multipartyism in Kenya was partly conditionality for financial assistance by donors (Brown 2001). Although Kenyans had been pushing for democracy, the legalisation of opposition parties in December 1991 by Moi regime was largely a reaction to donors’ suspension of financial assistance. I noted here that Moi only cancelled the single-party provision of the constitution, leaving intact and at his disposal the entire repressive state machinery. Using repressive tactics, he manipulated the electoral system and stayed in power until 2002. Kenya’s democratic project also suffered from the lack of support for reforms from its Western diplomatic allies whose involvement in Kenya’s politics was lopsided towards their interests at the expense of the expanding concerns of the suffering masses. Despite the political difficulties faced by the opposition as a result of the hostile political climate leading to the elections, donors went ahead and endorsed the results. They failed to prolong and deepen their engagement to promote any significant institutional reforms in the country. Thus in assessing the performance of democracy as a form of governance, if we ask, what has liberal democracy meant in Kenya? It has simply meant the following (1) the end of the one-party political system; (2) the emergence of political competition; and (3) the holding of “free and fair” multi-party elections (also see Chabal 1998, p.259). The political participation of the citizenry has simply been

reduced to casting the vote, with election results looking like a census of the different ethnic groups in Kenya.

Broadly, a key challenge to democratization in most of Africa has also been around the difference in the conceptualization of “democracy” as well as the difference in the formula for democratization. African democracies promote collective rights and responsibilities, liberal democracy ‘on the other hand limit the “democratic playing field”’ as well as limit ‘cooperative, lasting relationships with “the other”’ (Bradley 2005, p.407). Moreover, liberal democracy provides for individual rights, while individualism is never promoted in African ways of life (Ake 1993). In the African context, the role of political parties is therefore to gain communal interests; multiparty politics thus becomes a contest of ethnic groups for the state. It is therefore problematic to ‘assume that political parties are the appropriate mechanism for political competition under such conditions’ (Ake 1993, p.243). The way citizens relate to the state and to the ethnic community has also been a key factor, In Africa, the ethnic community is perceived to reflect the interests of the people, thus in the context of infant democracies like Kenya, political parties are formed to respond to the collective interests of the ethnic community, this is in contrast to what happens in Western countries where citizens identify more with the state; a legitimately elected body, perceived to represent the interests of all the people within its political boundary.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### Analytical Summary and Conclusion

#### 8. Analytical Summary

Kenya's political malaise arises from a fragmented political system that is rooted in the colonial state but also a popular recourse for postcolonial leaders. The problem of political integration is broadly concerned with how to build a single coherent political society from a multiplicity of traditional societies, how to increase cultural homogeneity and value consensus, and how to elicit, from the individual, deference and devotion to the claims of the state (Ake 1967). I draw on Habermas (1987, 1996) theses of Public sphere and Communicative action. Habermas' (1987) notion of the public sphere represents a space in which citizens engage in rational discussions on matters affecting them, limiting the encroachments of the state and the economy on their private lives; the public sphere is in this sense an integral part of everyday life that enables people to interact and make sense of their lives. The theory of Communicative action emphasise broad public participation, sharing of information with the public, reaching consensus through public discussion rather than application of power, devolution of state executive power and powers of politicians.

The result is the creation of a shared political culture<sup>45</sup> and political integration. According to Ake (1967) involves the process of inculcating and deepening the belief that the individual ought to identify with the state and accept its interests leading to the progressive development of a political system characterized with unambiguous sense of identity with the state and other members of the civic body. Ake (1967) provides four political mechanisms of political systems that are useful in facilitating the development of political integration in multi-ethnic societies such as Kenya. These are: 'authoritarian, paternal, "identific," and consensual' (Ake 1967, p.488). Below I use the aforementioned political mechanisms necessary for political integration as points of reference in analysing the political systems in colonial and postcolonial Kenya.

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<sup>45</sup> Political culture 'consists of the system of empirical beliefs, expressive symbols, and values which defines the situation in which political action takes place.' (Ake 1967,p.487)

## 8.1 Authority of the government over the masses

Ake (1967) postulates that given the covert instability of the political systems over which the leaders of the new states presided, their political authoritarianism is understandable. Ake (1967) argues that during the transitional periods the pursuit of integration greatly requires authoritarianism because the demands of high social and economic adjustments often create a sense of chaos. It is given that any attempt to change the economic structure to promote integration is likely to cause anxieties of certain groups with vested interests within the economy. Similarly given the strength of identity sentiments, an attempt at making people to relate to national symbols rather than to tribal ones is likely to create enemies for the new order. Moreover, a Democratic diffusion of power is only possible when there is 'the existence of internalized and institutionalized restraints potent enough to prevent the different pockets of power from destroying one another (and the state) through uninhibited self-assertiveness' (Ake 1967, p.489). Thus to be able to deal with all these challenges and maintain some level of political stability during the transitional phase, it is required that the government be strong enough to deal with the centrifugal forces that the drive for integration will activate; the government must also be able to decide and act quickly. According to Ake (1967, p. 489-490), in analysing authoritarianism some of the questions one needs to ask:

- a) Are political resources (i.e., means of gaining political power, such as money) concentrated in a few hands?
- b) Is the social structure such that the influence of the ruling elite is cumulative? In other words, does control over political resources give the elite control over other resources?"
- c) Does the "output of messages" from the government outweigh the "input of messages" from society?"
- d) Is the coercive personnel of the government large, loyal, and effective?
- e) Is interest articulation largely limited to suggestion of policy alternatives within the governmental structure
- f) In the light of the division of power in the constitution, is the central government strong in relation to regional and local governments?
- g) Can the central government easily evade the constitutional checks on the exercise of its power?

Looking at Kenya, we have established that the colonial state was ordered by political despotism and violence against the natives through a bifurcated state in which there were two systems of relating with the state with two different institutions: one for the colons and one for the natives through the chiefs under customary law. Mamdani (1996, p.147) points that in the colonial state: 'the authority of the chief thus fused in a single person all moments of power: judicial,

legislative, executive, and administrative. The authority was like a clenched fist, necessary because the chief stood at the intersection of the market and the nonmarket economy'. This was carried over to the postcolonial state particularly during Kenyatta's and Moi's tenures. Indeed in the post-colonial Kenya, most rural and poorer Kenyans continue to fear the chief who has recourse to the coercive powers of the administration through a special police force; the Administration Police who work under the authority of the chief at the community level (Klopp, 2001, p.478). The local administrative structures are also utilized by high-level patrons such as ministers, to gain information about what is happening in their constituencies and to maintain control (Klopp, 2001). Local level administrators, such as chiefs and sub-chiefs, collected KANU membership dues until recently, seeing it as their duty to promote KANU in their area of jurisdiction. In the multi-party era, most administrators continue to operate on behalf of the office that appoints them - the Office of the President:

Ask any Member of Parliament, he will have no faith in either the marauding "police" in his constituency or in the chiefs. He might pretend if he is a KANU member, but deep down in him, the state of relationship between the MP and the, Provincial Administration is one of at arm's length. If the MP is a member of the opposition, then certainly these officials will be looking for excuses to harass and arrest him to attract the President's attention for favours, such as a promotion or commendation in public for a job well done. On the other hand, they will go out of their way to please a KANU MP and avail him service, advice and guidance. As for a "Minister," that is an opportunity for the DO to try and get in an additional word to the President (Klopp, 2002, p.478-479)).

Under the Public Order Act, the administration controls the use of the public sphere. This Act stipulates that police officers are to authorise all public gatherings or meetings and 'any public meeting requires a license from the District Commissioner' (Klopp 2001:478). Although, meet-the-people tours and internal party meetings were excluded from these licensing requirements after 1997, the police continue to attack particularly opposition meetings for "security reasons" (Klopp, 2001, p.479). Ake argues that some level of authoritarianism is necessary for a successful political integration of multi-ethnic societies. Democratic diffusion of power presupposes the existence of internalized and institutionalized restraints potent enough to prevent the different pockets of power from destroying one another (and the state) through uninhibited self-assertiveness. Kenya has been largely under direct and indirect authoritarianism, but this despotism has never really been directed at integrating the various ethnic communities' equally



under one political system to create a stable nation state or establishing a political culture of nationalism.

Still today, despotism is practised by those in power against ethnic communities that are opposing the sitting president. Thus its application to promote ethnic interests continues to promote ethnic division and conflict. As the empirical indicators advanced by Ake indicate authoritarianism has been present in Kenya, yet it has not been directed at building national ideologies to unite Kenyans of diverse ethnic groups, instead, it has been used to marginalise and alienate opposing ethnic groups from the state. Power and resources at any time in Kenya is always concentrated within the ethnic groups that have one of their 'own' in the state house and in the constituencies of powerful cabinet ministries. And so the state is not seen as an autonomous entity exercises authority equally over all citizens. As I have already indicated, Kenyatta's government was for the Kikuyus, Moi government was for the Kalenjins and Kibaki's government is widely seen as a Kikuyu affair by ethnic groups feeling marginalised from state resources and power.

## **8.2 Paternalism and Mentortorship**

Ake (1967, p.490) postulates that for social integration to be successful, the leaders of the new state must not only concentrate power in their own hands, they must also "father" social transformation. Social transformation, Ake (1967) argues, can only happen when leaders are not merely maintaining the existing political systems but are innovating new ways of social cohesion that force the society to change-on a massive scale. This requires doing away with some practices as and discouraging some traditional symbols of collective identity by promoting new norms, new goals, and new motivations. There must also be a restructuring of social and economic relationships (Ake 1967). 'They are, in effect, introducing a style of life that is quite alien to their people. They must supply the initiative for realizing it. Inevitably, politics takes on a paternalistic tone' (Ake 1967, 490), some of the questions to address to address here are:

- a) Does the "output of messages" from the government outweigh the "input of messages" from society?
- b) Are associational interest groups controlled by the ruling elite?

- c) Are political leaders more oriented to system innovation than to system maintenance?
- d) Do political leaders see themselves as "fathers" of the nation?
- e) Does the ruling elite presume to know what is best for the nation?
- f) Has the ruling elite been able to devise some means (e.g., an ideology) for giving its followers a central perspective on life?

The political and socioeconomic conditions in Kenya, just as they were in the colonial period, remain highly paternalistic. But this is not in the way Ake understands paternalism. In Kenya, paternalism expresses itself exclusively within members of an ethnic group and is maintained by the political elites through patron–client networks. Kenyatta’s government did not forge the development of national ideologies within the wider Kenyan society. In the newly independent Kenya, Kikuyus were the benefactors of the Kenyatta regime just as the White Settlers were in the colonial political economy. Similarly, Kalenjins grossly benefited during Moi’s tenure as other ethnic communities continued to be marginalised from state political power and resources. Furthermore, Moi a strong advocate of *Majimboism* did not seek to formulate nationalistic policies, but used his twenty four year reign to accumulate wealth and build infrastructure for the Kalenjins. His tribal paternalism also became apparent when he reenergised the *Majimboism* debate as soon as Kenyans and the international community started pushing for multiparty democracy. His main concern was to ensure that all the wealth he had secured for “his people” in the Rift valley was not going to benefit other ethnic groups once someone else was in power. The rhetoric of nationalism has existed as a useful apparatus to ensure ethnic communities affiliated to these leaders had access to an expanded political and economic arena.

Moreover political participation in Kenya is limited to a small number of ruling elite, for the most part during Kenyatta and Moi’s tenures the state was in total control of political discourse and those seen to oppose the state ended up facing the despotic arm of the government. Those who challenged Kenyatta, like Jaramogi Oginga Odinga ended up in detention camps, J.M Kariuki KANU MP for Nyandarua North and the fiercest critics of Kenyatta’s dictatorial government was brutally murdered in the Ngong forest in March 1975 (Omolo 2007). Similarly in 1990, John Robert Ouko the Kenya’s Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation was brutally murdered in mysterious circumstances during Moi’s authoritarian regime (Omolo 2007). Presently the political environment in Kenya is not suppressive, there is a good level of freedom of expression but the government is still able to manipulate political

system in its favour. Political contests in Kenya are never purely over ideological differences; the civil society remains fragmented along ethnic lines. It has been observed that when leaders of the civil society belong to the presidents ethnic group they are often co-opted into the government, I have already touched on the case of Njoki Ndungu who was nominated to Parliament and John Githongo of Transparency International - Kenya Chapter - who was appointed Permanent Secretary and presidential advisor on matters of governance and corruption after the 2007 elections (Wanyande, p.16)

Even with a new constitution of devolved governance structures, system transformation or innovation is still not a feature of Kenya's political scene. Politicians continue to employ ethnic politics. Competitive multi party politics is still entrenched in ethnic divisions as leaders manipulate the electoral system for their own political gains. These have featured through privatized state violence, massive ethnic cleansing of opposing ethnic communities, electoral malpractices and divisive public discourses. Kenya is yet to have a charismatic leader who is perceived by all Kenyans across the ethnic divide as the "father of the nation".

### **8.3 Ethnic Mobilisation and Electoral Democracy**

Ake (1967) observes that a striking feature of a newly independent state is the sociocultural gap between the elite and the masses, which poses the threat of distancing the ruling elite from the masses. One of the ways to bridge this gap is through politicians adopting a political style and the way of life that shows great concern for, and identify with, the masses. This means political leaders must avoid excessive accumulation through corruption, conspicuous consumption, and social condescension to establish a politics embellished in a 'populist' tone. Moreover Ake advises that 'social mobilization entails breaking down physical barriers and facilitating a greater flow of goods and services between the different parts of the country, developing the mass media and urban centres, inculcating new norms, and so on' 1967,p.488). This involves encouraging leaders to be concerned about the welfare of all its citizens, instead of pursuing ethnic interests. Questions (Ake 1967, p.491) to address here are:

- a) Is the "political formula" of the ruling elite widely accepted?"
- b) Is the incidence of anomie interest articulation low?
- c) Are there cultural symbols and historical experiences that can be exploited for reinforcing social solidarity?

- d) Is there a general feeling that political leaders are not enjoying an unduly large share of the economic rewards of the system?
- e) Is there a general feeling that political leaders are diligent and honest servants of the public interest?

We have established that most political leaders and cabinet minister view the state coffers as their purse. Ethnic competition is aimed at state control, because whoever is in power supports “his” people excluding ‘the others’, this is more because of the centrality of the state in economic activity and particularly, the role of the state as the ‘driver’ of the accumulation process. The state posits itself as the ‘most important dispenser of patronage and resources’ means that the control of the state or closeness to those who have access to the state becomes the main obsession of politics (Ajulu 1998, p.278. Kenyan ruling elite have failed to mentor and developed the innovative capabilities of young breed of political leaders; instead they have been looked upon as a threat to political ambitions of the old guns. For a long time, Kenya has had the same people in the political space, with the same politics of ethnicised propaganda and pursuance of self-interests.

Most Kenyan also feel marginalized from the ruling elite, political leaders live lifestyles that are so far removed from the poor masses and yet the masses still hold a belief that the only hope for access to state resources is voting for leaders of their ethnicity.

In a new state the kind of political ties within the ruling elite is important. Ake mentions that coalition of political leaders should come from the main social, professional, and ethnic groups of the society. Ake argues ‘as much as possible, every major group should be represented’ (1967, p.492). Policies that the new state formulates should be able to win the broadest possible support within the leading coalition, and also with the masses from every ethnic group. Ake (1967) further cautions that great care should be taken to ensure that at least one representative of every major group occupies an important government position, so that there is not a faction in the state that feels alienated. There should be an effort of collective responsibility coming from the elite. For Ake, this has two advantages, one, when the government is perceived to represents the major interests chances of its being regarded as an instrument for promoting particularistic (as opposed to public) interests is reduced. This places the government at a better position in winning the

confidence of the citizenry. Subsequently this reduces the divisive effects of social differences.

Here one should grapple with the following:

- a) Are there strong deterrents (coercive, economic, and so on) to factionalism within the ruling elite? b) Is every major social and ethnic group adequately (as judged by numerical strength, economic power, and so on) represented in the government?
- c) Is there a symbol (e.g., a charismatic leader, an ideology) that commands the loyalty of the ruling elite?
- d) Is the number of influential people openly hostile to the government small (in relation to the number of influential people openly supporting the government)?
- e) Is there machinery for resolving conflict within the ruling elite? Are the decisions reached by means of this machinery generally respected and accepted?

We have seen that the political elite in Kenya are also the catalysts of disunity in the country as they aspire to shape political parties, their leadership, composition, association, and voting behaviour, along ethnic lines. All political coalitions in Kenya have been characterized by ethnic airs and this works against the political integration of the people. For instance, the initial movement for change, the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (FORD) was apolitical umbrella that united major Kikuyu, Luo, and Luhya leaders. When Moi succumbed to pressure to allow multipartyism, Mwai Kibai defected from FORD and formed his own political party the Democratic Party (DP) which became the second opposition party. Within FORD, Odinga and Matiba could not agree on who would carry the banner as the presidential candidate, resulting in a split. With the split Odinga's FORD-Kenya became a predominantly a Luo party, but with the support of a faction of the Luhya community and a faction from the Coast under the banned Islamic Party of Kenya. With two Kikuyu candidates, Matiba's FORD-Asili came to represent the Kikuyu in the southern half of Central province, as well as in the cities of Nairobi and Nakuru, and a section of the Luhya as well while Kibaki's DP. Similarly a political alliance, the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC), an alliance between the National Alliance Party of Kenya and the Liberal Democratic Party of Kenya, an brokered on a 50-50 basis collapsed soon after Mwai Kibaki ascended into power and failed to honour the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that they had signed prior to the elections as the blueprint for power sharing between the three groups.

## 8.4 Conclusion

I followed a broadly subjective approach, adopting a sociological critical discourse analysis that focused on both textual (discourse) and contextual analysis. The textual and contextual parameters were useful in understanding collective identities specifically ethnic identity, political groups and the kind of social relationships that they create. I looked at, political discourse and stereotyped belief systems that although geared towards garnering political support have had the effect of promoting hatred and leading to violent inter-ethnic conflicts in Kenya I analysed dominant ideologies concerning ethnic identity, citizenship and competitive politics. Through critical discourse analysis I have also interrogated legitimacy and the exercise of power in Kenya. I have highlighted ‘historical and cultural specificity’ of political problems or political formations, particularly the relationship between colonialism and modern ethnic identities in Kenya.

I established that broader theoretical analysis of nations and nationalism including ethnic groups and ethnic nationalism has centred around arguments on the ‘essence’ of the nation as opposed to its constructed form, the antiquity of the nation versus its purely modern form and the cultural basis of nationalism versus its political aspirations. Three positions have often been put forward in discussions on nations and nationalism: Primordialism, ethno symbolism and modernism. The primordialist that rests on the belief that genetic link is the origin of ethnic groups remains questionable given the increasing knowledge that no ethnic group can prove pure genetic association. Although modernists rightly claim that it is the industrial revolution of the 18th century Europe that brought about culture and nationalism to the fore as a basis for modern nations-states that emerged after the American and French revolutions, clearly nations could not have just emerged from a vacuum. It could only have been through already existing forms of social organisations that a transition and change occurred overtime leading to nations as we know them today, signifying the changing nature of ethnic formations. Considering the intensity of ethnic conflicts around the world, one cannot deny the power of perceptions and sentiments, it remains that ethnic communities believe that they share a common ancestry, heritage and history, and this is very powerful. It is with this understanding of ethnic formations as changing that I appropriated Mamdani’s thesis of bifurcated state and the role of colonialism and its modernist

ideologies in forging modern African ethnicities, formations that within the wider context of the nation state are clearly political identities.

Drawing from the political discourses there is a strong indication that ethnicity has been and is still a dominant force behind political power struggles and access to state resources in Kenya. Ethnic propaganda and ethnic stereotypes in the negative remain a strong political force in the mobilization of political support from members and allies of one's ethnic. They are often expressed implicitly and explicitly in political campaigns, public meetings and through vernacular radio, text messages, leaflets and speeches. In Kenya they are used to align members' representations, interpretations and meaning with that of the political elite thereby giving these politicians advantage within the group or political alliance of ethnic groups. Ethnicised speeches of hatred played a crucial role in the 2008 post-election violence in Kenya and have been identified as a dangerous stimulus for interethnic violent conflict.

I also demonstrated how the divisive politics in Kenya have their roots in the administrative practices of the colonial state; the political and economic structures and practices of the colonial state, particularly 'its demarcation of political boundaries and classification of people', institutionalised by law; it also demonstrates a European imagining of African cultures and institutions' (Berman, 1998). Another problem lies with the economic structure of the colonial state which led to a disproportionate regional development (Kwaja 2009). The resulting hierarchical power relations formed, and inequalities created across ethnic groups, through colonial powers' practices greatly complicates the formation of a nation-state in Kenya. These all continue to reinvented and shape political processes in Kenya within the cleavages of tribe and encouraged people to think ethnically. Another contributing factor lies in the forging of the nation state as a bifurcated state that discouraged the incorporation of Kenyans into the state as individuals (citizens) but encouraged their participation within the wider political economy as collectives of ethnic groups, remember that in the bifurcated state only whites were given the citizen status, while indigenous Africans were given the "subject" status, and only incorporated into the larger political economy as ethnic groups through the chiefs. Furthermore, politics in Kenya are shaped in ethnic forms because the colonial state restricted political activism to within ethnic groups.

I also found that ethnicised conflicts in Kenya are about historical injustices particularly the disproportionate redistribution of resources, after independence, this is mainly a concern about loss land. A major grievance in this regard is the failure of Kenya's first president Mzee Jomo to address the Land issue. It is perceived that he did not judiciously redistribute land. There is a protracted protest by Kalenjins, the Maasai and the Coastal communities of Kenya who lost the land to the white settlers but did not get it land back after independence. Moreover, a section of the Kikuyus also feel aggrieved by the injustice of not getting back their land during the redistribution exercise. Most of them were resettled as squatters in land that formerly belonged to Kalenjin and Coastal communities. This continues to breed ethnic animosities between the Kikuyu and Kalenjins as well as coastal communities and has often been manipulated by uncouth politicians for political interests. Moreover, past and present leaders in the country have failed to foster a sense of unity by promoting equitable access to public resources for all Kenyans, it is a felt grievance that Kenyatta channelled public wealth to Kikuyus; Moi channelled public wealth to Kalenjins; Kibaki channelled public wealth to Kikuyus and cabinet ministers continue to direct development schemes and government projects to their constituencies, the cycle continues.

In dealing with the problems of Ethnicity and Citizenship in Kenya, the I found that there is a problem of reconciling bureaucratic state channels of access to state resources such as employment and the non-bureaucratic state channels that characterizes ethnic communal life that is embedded in African culture of sharing and communal welfare. The African political economy is enshrined within the ideology of moral ethnicity and political tribalism, which plays out through patron-client networks. It is a known fact that in Kenya, state employment and political appointments are what leaders in power use to garner support from their respective communities. It has been observed in Kenya: appointments to public service are 'largely made according to the wishes of political leaders' (Chabal and Daloz 1999, p.6). Every civil servant's social responsibility is first to members of their ethnic group; civil servants use their position to find jobs for their fellow members. The result is that ethnic communities feeling marginalized will rise against the incumbent leader and members of his ethnic community. Grievances are often horizontal in nature, affecting the entire ethnic group. Ethnicity thus becomes the tool for displaying dissatisfaction, displacing the civil society. Consequently leaders are not elected on the basis of their charisma, ideology, or accountability but based on their ethnicity (Hameso 1997, p.95). This problem persists due to the inability of ordinary Kenyans to separate social



differentiation and class formation, from debates over the legitimacy of political power and the definition of moral and political community largely defined in ethnic terms (Berman 1998). Nation state legitimacy is therefore undermined by the ethnicity as long as the state fails to satisfy the political and economic needs of every citizen.

I found that the problem lies within the conceptual contradictions in the way an individual is supposed to operate in the different contexts of African communalism and capitalist individualism. There is no doubt that African solidarity and communalism defines the people's perception of 'self-interest and their location in the social whole' (Ake 1994, P.243). Two factors are important here: one, the agency of an individual citizen in the national space; that is their aims and ambitions is informed, formed and revised by their experiential life in parochial communities. Hence, communal or ethno-regional obligations affect one's individual preferences in the nation-state arena, given that collective responsibilities are more 'effectively enforced' in the ethnic community (Ndegwa 1997). Two, individuals experience liberal citizenship demands at the national level, which they may or may not find consistent with (or advantageous to) civic-republican demands within ethnic communities (Ndegwa 1997). For example, in the Weberian nationalist ideology, employment is based on meritocracy and impersonal criteria (Eriksen 1991); every citizen has a fair chance of employment as long as they have the necessary formal qualifications, regardless of the personal relationship between employer and applicant. As already mentioned, in African communalism, giving a relative or fellow ethnic member a job is even without following the correct bureaucratic channels is seen as an obligation (Lamb 1984). Indeed many Kenyan politicians adopt the view that helping your own hometown is a key aspect of development (Hameso 1997). This 'illiberal' republican citizenship within the ethnic group therefore ends up undermining the 'liberal' citizenship that is supposed to be assumed in the national community.

Broadly a key challenge to democratization in most of Africa has also been around the conceptualization of "democracy" in the context of Africa. African democracies promote collective rights and responsibilities, in contrast, the concept of liberal democracy, and 'on the other hand limit the "democratic playing field"' as well as limit 'cooperative, lasting relationships with "the other"' (Bradley 2005,p.407). Liberal democracy, aka the Western style, provides for individual rights, while individualism is never promoted in African ways of life

(Ake 1993). In this context, political parties cannot make sense; communal or group interests remain essentially important. It is therefore problematic to 'assume that political parties are the appropriate mechanism for political competition under such conditions' (Ake 1993, p.243).

Citizens in Western countries identify with the state, which as an elected body, is perceived to represent the interests of the people. In Africa, the ethnic community reflects the interests of the people. Thus, 'in the context of infant democracies like Kenya, political parties are formed to respond to the collective interests of the ethnic community. Thus the mobilization of ordinary people is centred on ethnic ties and religious linkages' (Bradley2005, p.408) and, here; identity is primarily reflected in one's communal adaptations and traditions. Given that there is often a large diversity of ethnic groups in African countries; the state's understanding of governance is not always harmonious with that of the heterogeneous peoples it is governing. This is because each ethnic group has a particular view of "governance" and perceptions informed by issues of interest to them. Such ideological contradictions are reflected at the local, state, and national levels. As long as a socio-cultural ideology remains at the centre of economic and political participation, liberal democracy remains a foreign concept in Africa.

In analysing democratization in Kenya, it emerged that the immediate push for multiparty democracy in Kenya encountered numerous challenges. The legalisation of opposition parties in December 1991 by Moi regime was largely a reaction to donors' suspension of financial assistance. The study noted that Moi only cancelled the single-party provision of the constitution, leaving intact and at his disposal the entire repressive state machinery. As such, democratisation did not lead to a transformation of the political system but forced the government to resort to privatized state violence to silence opposition parties and their followers. This manifested through the attack of members of ethnic groups associated with the opposition, mostly the Kikuyu, Luo and Luhya in several KANU-dominated areas, mainly in the Rift Valley, by hired militias. There was also the detention of persons without trial, the enactment of discriminate licensing of public meetings and registration of political parties. Moreover, chiefs and provincial administrations were given extremely broad authority over the masses to intimidate opposition groups. There was also an apparent bias in the state media that barred the opposition groups from equal access to state-run electronic media (Klopp 2001). Moi also manipulate the electoral

system through the appointment of the members of the electoral commission, increasing the number of constituencies in KANU zones (Foeken and Dietz 2000) and buying votes.

The 2007 elections were not different, since Kibaki took over in 2002; ethnic communities associated with the opposition have been harassed and attacked by a group of Kikuyu militia called *Mungiki* (BBC News 2008). The 2007-2008 post-election violence broke it was highly believed by most Kenyans that Kibaki had rigged the vote (Gallup 2008). The same observation was also shared by the international community observers who concluded that that Kibaki did not win the 2007 elections (US International Republican Institute 2008, EU Election Observation Mission 2008). These illegitimate ways through which leaders get access to power, forces them to focus their energies on system maintenance instead of promoting innovation and transformation; they fail to inspire a new breed of leaders who can bring political and social transformation. This leads to a low participation of the masses in the political space.

The democratisation process in Kenya also faced problems resulting from country's diplomatic ties with the West. It has been noted that in the face of a political revolution that would have destabilised the country, and hence the region, 'donors' primary concern was to avoid any situation that would have broken down the political and economic order, and this meant legitimising and prolonging authoritarian rule (Brown 2001). They failed to prolong and deepen their engagement to promote any significant institutional reforms in the country. Furthermore, they kept 'endorsing unfair elections (including suppressing evidence of their illegitimacy) and subverting domestic efforts to secure far-reaching reforms' (Brown 2001, p.725).

In contemporary Kenya, ethnic diversity is not necessarily a bad thing; poor leadership is also a contributing factor to the political turmoil in the country. Under current democratic framework, the public space and political participation is the playing field of the political elite, with the larger population's participation reduced simply to casting the vote. Political currents in Kenya are still not characterised by discursive political participation and largely do not exhibit Herbama's (1996) notion of communicative action, this can also be attributed to the general lack of access to objective information and civic education by the population.

## 8.5 Way Forward

Kenya needs leaders who will inspire all Kenyans across the ethnic divide to take pride in being Kenyan citizens; this is possible by establishing a political culture of shared citizenship. This requires a complete reform of the political system so that democracy does not just mean competition of ethnic groups for the control of the state, but that there is a deliberated formation of structures and institutions that inculcate democratic values and practices including in the electoral system. This should involve deliberation on all issues that affect the Kenyan population. Political parties should not be building on ethnic ideologies, and should promote membership across the ethnic divide. This calls for the destruction and modification of behaviours and traditions that promote traditional symbols of collective identity; as Ake suggests, 'they must induce the people to accept new norms, new goals, new motivations; they must readjust patterns of social and economic relationship' (Ake 1967, p.490). This can be achieved by ensuring that each Kenyan has an equal access to state resources, economic and socio-political rights. It is imperative that grievances of injustice particularly with regards to the land question are addressed. The political economy should be seen to promote equitable development and distribution of resources. This requires that 'social mobilization entails breaking down physical barriers and facilitating a greater flow of goods and services between the different parts of the country, developing the mass media and urban centres, inculcating new norms, and so on' (Ake 1967,p.488). Leaders and citizens should aspire to work together in doing away with ethnicised patronage politics to ensure that all Kenyans have a sense of belonging to Kenya. This involves encouraging leaders to be concerned about the welfare of all its citizens, instead of pursuing collective ethnic interests.

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## Appendix 1: Podcasts and You-Tube videos on Ethnic politics and violence in Kenya

### Podcasts:

Pascale, H 2008, Kenya violence, *BBC documentaries*, Thu, 31 Jan 2008

[http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/worldservice/docarchive/doc\\_20080131-0906.mp3](http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/worldservice/docarchive/doc_20080131-0906.mp3)

Wooldridge, M 2008, What Next for Kenya? - Part One, *BBC documentaries*, Tue, 20 May 2008

[http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/worldservice/docarchive/docarchive\\_20080520-1502.mp3](http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/worldservice/docarchive/docarchive_20080520-1502.mp3)

Wooldridge, M 2008, What Next for Kenya? - Part Two, *BBC documentaries*, Tue, 27 May 2008

[http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/worldservice/docarchive/docarchive\\_20080527-1401.mp3](http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/podcasts/worldservice/docarchive/docarchive_20080527-1401.mp3)

### You Tube Videos

KenyaCarlson , Heal the Nation (Kenya Post-Election Violence Documentary)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PUUcjWC6rG8>

Al Jazeera English 28 Jan 08 Post-election violence continuing across Kenya,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mJ7Hv4xjhUM>

Al Jazeera English 28 Feb 08, Inside Story- Kenya breakthrough

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AmFF5KIoKGg>

NTV Kenya, Tribal thread in Kenya politics, Jan 18, 2011, <http://youtu.be/VdnRjPdKzEI>

Al Jazeera, 'What is fuelling Kenya's ethnic violence?' Jan 17, 2013

<http://youtu.be/koyXeSUmSME>

IRIN Films, 'Us and Them' Feb 19, 2013, <http://youtu.be/WihdInfVAqE>



## Appendix 2: Satire on tribalism politics and corruption

Satirists, cartoonists and graffiti artists have a field day as politicians eye elections scheduled for March 4



Nairobi, Kenya - A vulture-like politician sits in Kenya's parliament, scoffing at the tribes people who vote for him despite his money-grabbing ways. This eye-catching graffiti image, decorating a wall in downtown Nairobi, attacks voting along ethnic lines and corruption in national politics.

Source: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/02/2013217105233247915.html>

## Appendix 3: Demonstrates that voters prefer to vote for candidate of their own ethnicity

December 17, 2007

Ahead of Kenya's Election, Top Candidates Virtually Tied

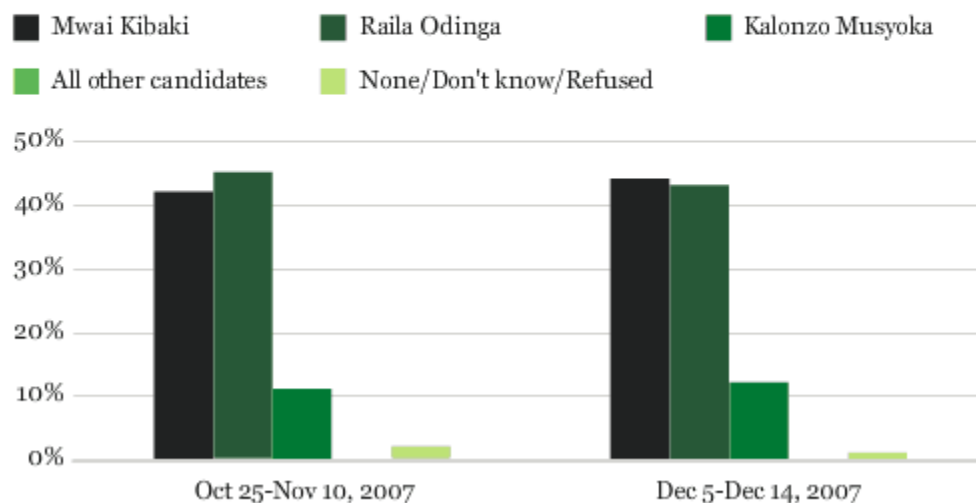
Forty-four percent of registered Kenyan voters support Kibaki; 43% support Odinga

by Magali Rheault and Bob Tortora

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- The latest Gallup Poll of Kenyan voters shows the two leading presidential hopefuls are still in a close race, just 10 days before the Dec. 27 election. Results from the Gallup Poll conducted between Dec. 5 and Dec. 14, 2007, show 44% of registered Kenyan voters say they intend to vote for incumbent President Mwai Kibaki from the Party of National Unity (PNU), while 43% say they plan to vote for Raila Odinga, who is running on the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) ticket. Kalonzo Musyoka of the Orange Democratic Movement-Kenya (ODM-K) elicits the support of 12% of registered Kenyan voters.

*Now, suppose that the presidential election were being held today, and it included Mwai Kibaki from the Party of National Unity (PNU), Raila Odinga of the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), Kalonzo Musyoka of the Orange Democratic Movement-Kenya (ODM-K), and Pius Muiru of the Kenya People's Party (KPP), among others. Whom would you vote for?*

Based on registered Kenyan voters



GALLUP POLL

Gallup conducted its first pre-election poll with Nairobi-based Research Path Associates in late October and early November, voters' intentions in the North Eastern, Rift Valley, and Western provinces have shifted considerably. In the North Eastern province, 51% of voters say they intend to cast their ballot for Kibaki, up from 15% in the previous poll. The Western province is

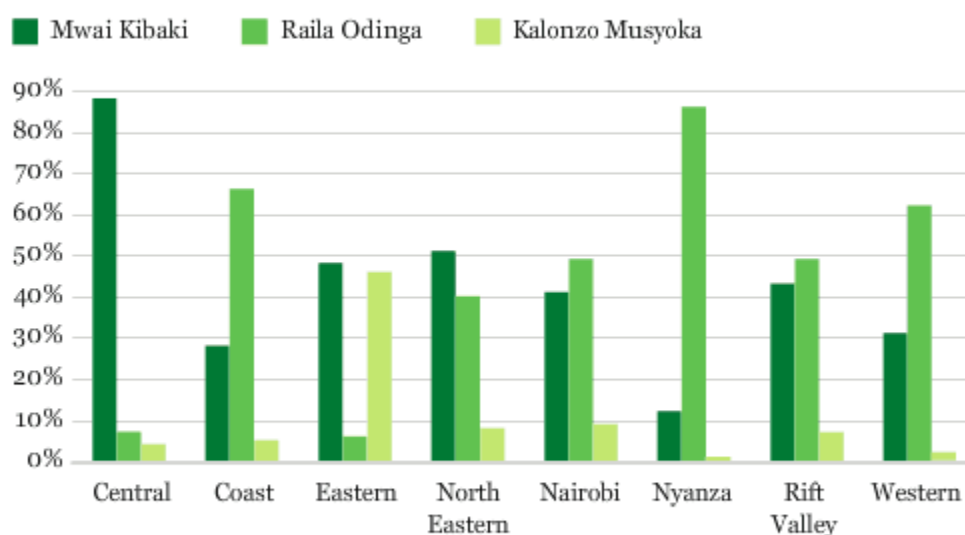
still firmly in Odinga's grasp, as 62% say they plan to vote for him, but the ODM candidate has lost nine points there and the PNU candidate has gained six points. In the Rift Valley, the gap between the two leading candidates has also narrowed from 10 points to 6 points.

Although support for Kibaki in the Central province is down four points from the previous poll, the province remains Kibaki's stronghold, as 88% of respondents indicate they intend to vote for him. Support for Odinga appears well anchored in Nyanza, as 86% of registered voters plan to cast their ballot for him, up five points from the previous poll.

Odinga maintains a slight edge over Kibaki among voters in Nairobi, with 41% of registered voters supporting Kibaki and 49% supporting Odinga. In the Coast province, Odinga has a 38-point lead over Kibaki, similar to the previously observed gap. The Eastern province remains divided between Kibaki (48%) and Musyoka (46%).

*Now, suppose that the presidential election were being held today, who would you vote for?*

Voters' Intentions by Province (Top Three Candidates)



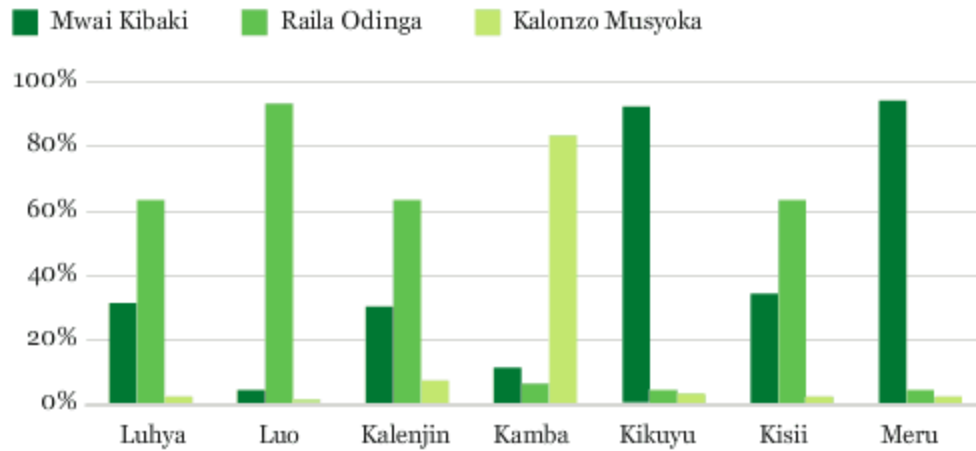
Poll conducted Dec. 5-Dec. 14, 2007

GALLUP POLL

Gallup's analysis of voters' intentions along ethnic lines reveals several important changes. In the latest poll, 94% of Merus say they intend to vote for Kibaki and 63% of Kisiis plan to cast their ballot for Odinga; both readings represent a 10-point increase from the previous poll. More than 8 in 10 Kambas (83%) are planning to vote for Musyoka, compared with 78% in the previous poll. Ninety-three percent of Luos say they intend to vote for Odinga and 92% of Kikuyus plan to cast their ballot for Kibaki; both percentages are unchanged from the previous readings.

*Now, suppose that the presidential election were being held today, who would you vote for?*

Voters' Intentions by Selected Ethnic Group (Top Three Candidates)



Poll conducted Dec. 5-Dec. 14, 2007

GALLUP POLL

## Survey Methods

Results are based on face-to-face interviews with 2,000 registered voters between Dec. 5, 2007, and Dec. 14, 2007, in Kenya. Previous poll results were based on face-to-face interviews with 2,000 registered voters between Oct. 25, 2007, and Nov. 10, 2007, in Kenya. The interviews were conducted in 400 Primary Sampling Units allocated proportionally to the population aged 18 and older in the eight Kenyan provinces. A random route procedure was used to select households and each household, the Kish Grid was used to select a registered voter randomly. For results based on the total sample of registered voters, one can say with 95% confidence that the maximum margin of sampling error is  $\pm 3$  percentage points. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

Source: <http://www.gallup.com/poll/103306/ahead-kenyas-election-top-candidates-virtually-tied.aspx>

## Appendix 4: Questions over integrity the of the electoral system and issues of contention

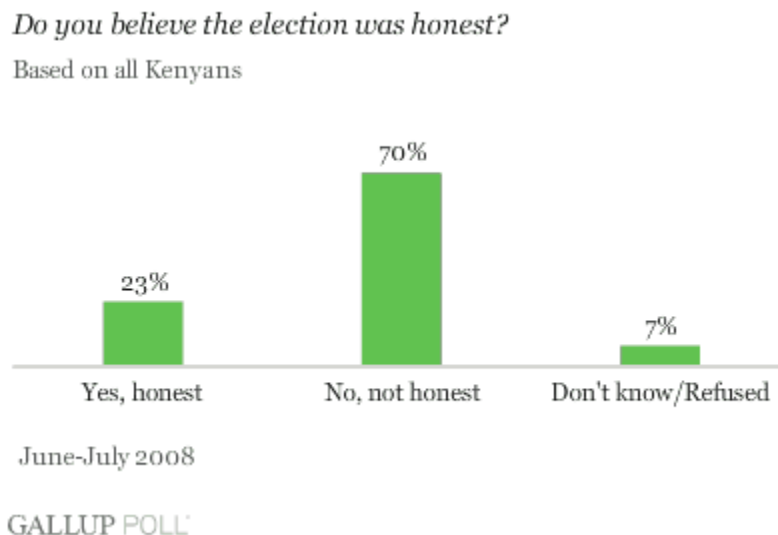
October 30, 2008

In Kenya, Most Ethnic Groups Distrust 2007 Election

Trust in Electoral Commission plunged 36 points between 2006 and 2008

by Magali Rheault and Bob Tortora

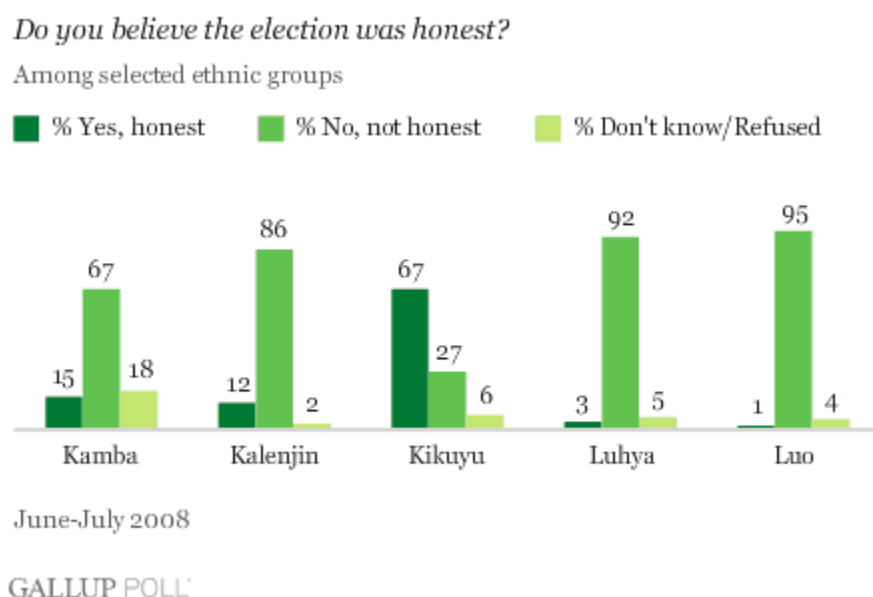
WASHINGTON, D.C. -- About six months after the highly contested presidential election in Kenya, a majority of Kenyans (70%) told Gallup they thought the election was dishonest. As Kenyans, along with the rest of the world, heard reports of irregularities during the electoral process, including vote-buying, ballot stuffing, and data tallying issues and delays reporting the results, such a finding is not surprising.



Violence broke out in several areas shortly after the Electoral Commission of Kenya announced that Mwai Kibaki, the incumbent from the Party of National Unity (PNU), had defeated Raila Odinga, the main opposition leader representing the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM). Although civil unrest had started a day earlier in Western Kenya to protest against reporting delays in some districts.

The Independent Review Commission (IREC), whose role it is to investigate the entire electoral process of last year's election, states in its report that Kibaki was "drawing his support mainly from the Kikuyu, Embu, and Meru communities," while Odinga had the support of the "Luo, Luhya, Kalenjin, and some smaller ethnic communities." In light of the importance of ethnicity in the development of Kenyan politics, information about candidates' ethnic support is particularly relevant.

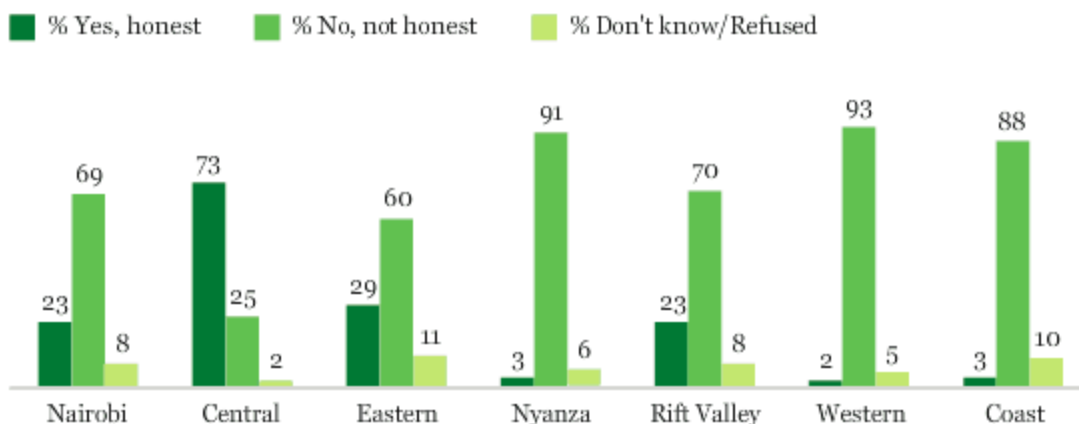
The Gallup Poll findings from June through July 2008 show that among the top five ethnic groups in Kenya, which represent more than two-thirds of the national population (Kikuyu, 19%; Kalenjin, 15%; Luo, 13%; Luhya, 12%; and Kamba, 9%), the self-identified Kikuyu are the only group in which a majority (67%) say the presidential election was honest. Few self-identified Luo (1%), Luhya (3%), Kalenjin (12%), and Kamba (15%) respondents believe the election was honest. Also, almost one in five Kamba (18%) do not have an opinion, which is by far the highest percentage of "don't knows" among the top five ethnic groups.



Ethnic attitudes toward the honesty of the election almost mirror the support that the top two presidential contenders draw from Kenya's provinces. (Click the **Context** tab to see a map that shows Kenya's provinces). In the Central province, a PNU stronghold, 73% of respondents believe the election was honest, while in the ODM-strong Nyanza and Western provinces, just 3% and 2%, respectively, say the same. In the Coast province, which has also supported the ODM ticket, only 3% of respondents believe the election was honest. In the mixed constituencies of the Rift Valley, Nairobi, and Eastern, 23%, 23%, and 29%, respectively, believe the election was legitimate. The sample size in the North Eastern province is too small to report the results.

*Do you believe the election was honest?*

By province



June-July 2008

Results from the North Eastern province are too small to report.

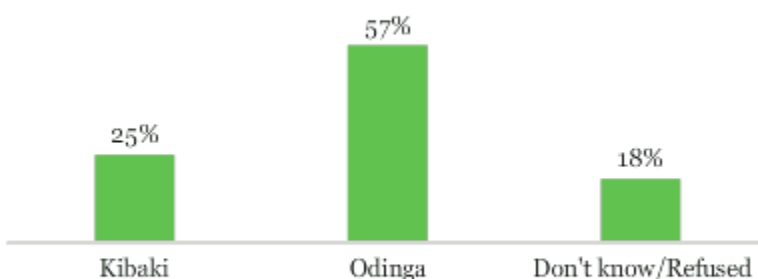
GALLUP POLL

### The Winner in Kenyans' Eyes

The IREC states, "the recorded and reported results are so inaccurate as to render any reasonably accurate, reliable and convincing conclusion impossible." Although Kenyans think the election was dishonest, a majority believe there was a winner.

*Whom do you believe won the election?*

Based on all Kenyans

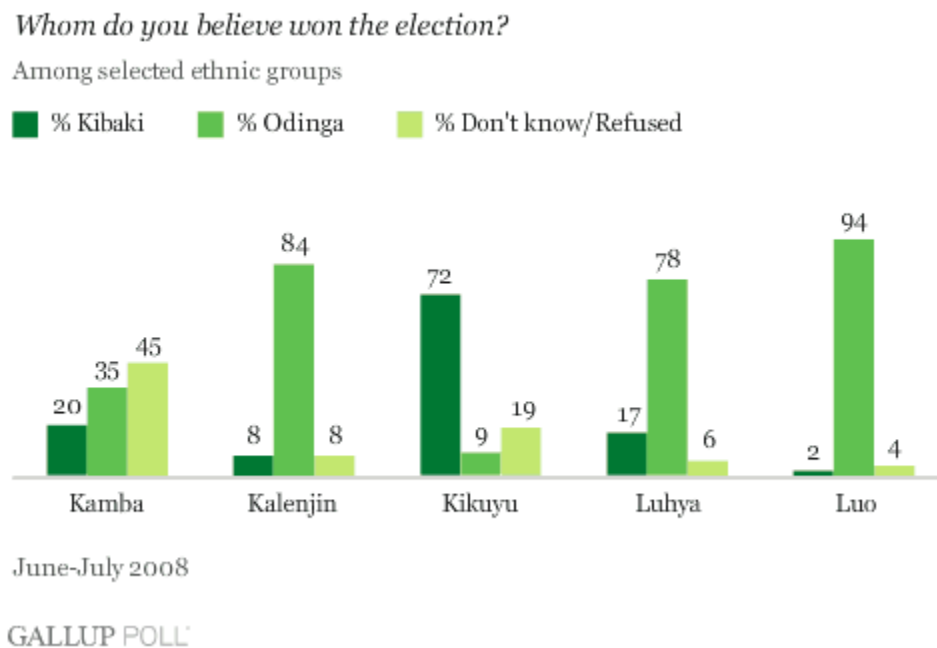


June-July 2008

GALLUP POLL

Ethnic attitudes toward the winner of the 2007 presidential election also mirror, for the most part, attitudes toward the honesty of the election. On the one hand, Kikuyu respondents (72%) believe Kibaki, who is a Kikuyu, won. (Although almost one in five do not have an opinion.) On the other hand, strong majorities of Luo (94%), Kalenjin (84%), and Luhya (78%) believe Odinga,

who is a Luo, won the election. Among the Kamba community, many say they do not know who won the election, while 20% believe Kibaki did and 35% think it was Odinga.



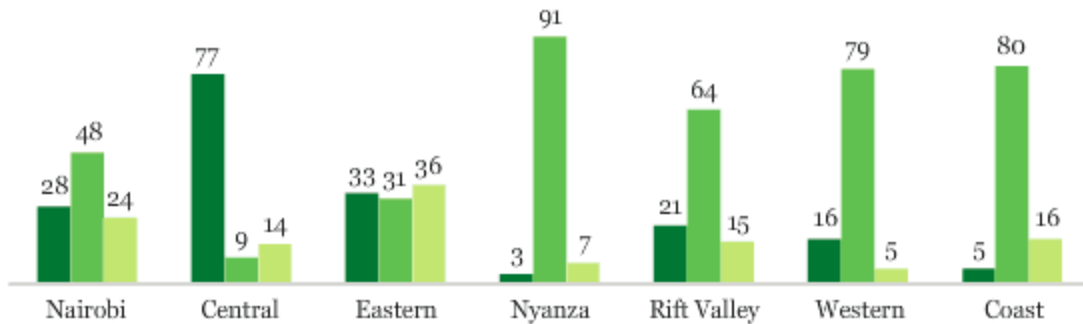
Similarly, across the provinces, attitudes regarding the outcome of the election align, in general, with attitudes toward the honesty of the election. Central is the only province where a majority of respondents (77%) believe Kibaki won. In Nyanza, Coast, Western, and the Rift Valley provinces, strong majorities (91%, 80%, 79%, and 64%, respectively) believe Odinga was the winner. In Nairobi, many respondents (48%) think Odinga won the election, but about one-quarter do not have an opinion. Finally, in the Eastern province, opinions are divided, with one-third who believe Kibaki won, another third think it was Odinga, and the remainder who say they do not know. Sample sizes in the North Eastern province are too small to report results.



### Whom do you believe won the election?

By province

■ % Kibaki ■ % Odinga ■ % Don't know/Refused



June-July 2008

Results from the North Eastern province are too small to report.

GALLUP POLL

### Views Toward the Electoral Process

Attitudes toward the honesty of elections, overall, are closely associated with perceptions of trust vis-à-vis the Electoral Commission. Before the December 2007 elections in Kenya, most had confidence in the honesty of elections (63% in 2006 and 55% in 2007). It is important to emphasize that Gallup conducted the 2007 poll *before* the crisis. Six months after the election and the violence that ensued, Kenyans' confidence in the honesty of elections had dropped to 22%. Similarly, public trust in the electoral commission experienced a large decline, from 60% in 2006 to 24% in 2008.

Across ethnic groups, the decline in confidence in the electoral process is widespread. Fewer than 10% of Kamba, Luo, and Luhya and 16% of Kalenjin say they have confidence in the honesty of elections. Among Kikuyu, only a slight majority (52%) say they do. Similarly, an autonomous electoral commission elicits the views of less than 10% of Kamba, Luo, and Luhya, while 40% of Kalenjin and only a plurality of Kikuyu trust the institution to be independent in its decisions.

Source: <http://www.gallup.com/poll/111622/Kenya-Most-Ethnic-Groups-Distrust-2007-Election.aspx>

*In Kenya, do you have confidence in the honesty of elections?*

Based on all Kenyans who say "yes"



Surveys conducted in April 2006, May 2007, and June-July 2008

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*Do you trust the electoral authority to be autonomous in its decisions?*

Based on Kenyans who say "yes"



Surveys conducted in April 2006, May 2007, and June-July 2008

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## Bottom Line

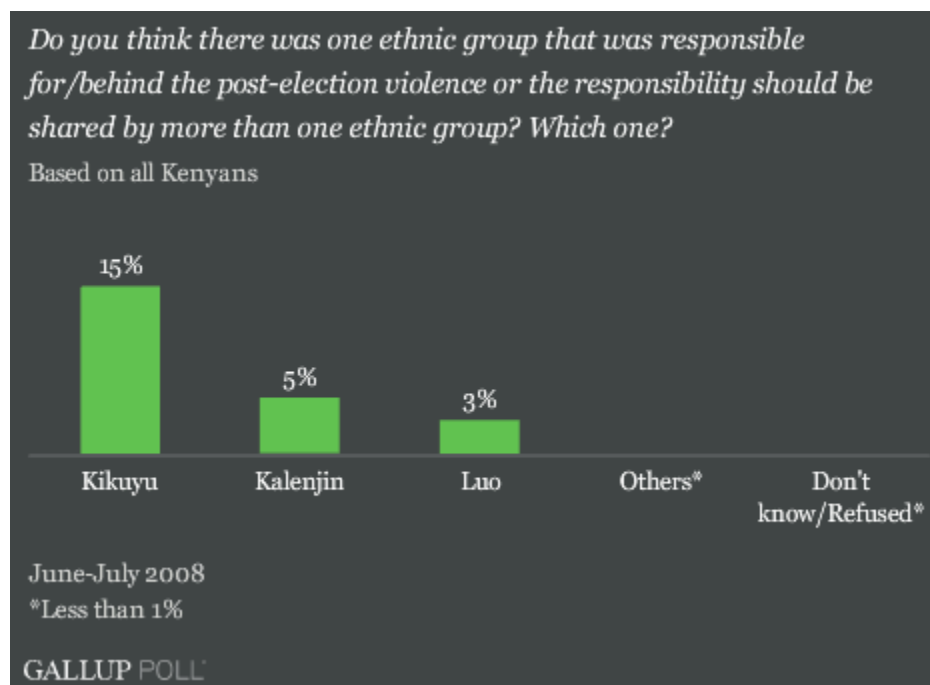
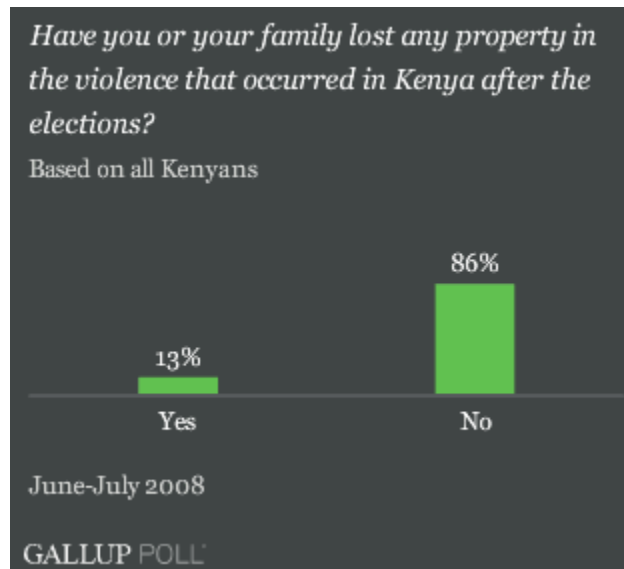
Conventional wisdom usually highlights the ethnic character of politics in Kenya, and the poll findings suggest a strong ethnic identification with last year's electoral turmoil. Except for Kikuyu, most Kenyans across the other top four ethnic groups believe the presidential election was dishonest. At least on these questions, Kikuyu appear to be siding with the candidate of their own ethnicity, while Luo and other groups do the same.

But the overall steep decline in Kenyans' trust toward elections underscores the severe impact of the crisis on the institution that lies at the center of the process and serves as the impartial arbiter of elections. Taken together, the findings put into sharp focus the challenges ahead in rebuilding public trust to ensure that Kenyans' voices will be heard freely and clearly at the ballot box.

## Survey Methods

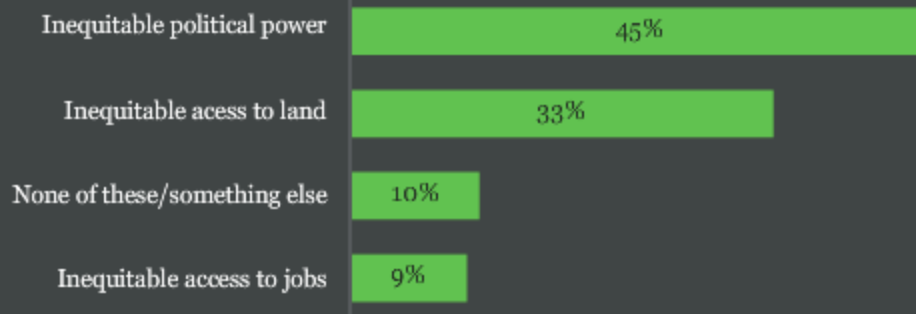
Results are based on face-to-face interviews with 2,200 adults, aged 15 and older, in Kenya between June 16 and July 8, 2008. Results from the other two surveys are based on face-to-face interviews with 1,000 adults, aged 15 and older, in Kenya in April 2006 and June 2007. For results based on the samples of national adults in 2006 and 2007, one can say with 95% confidence that the maximum margin of sampling error is  $\pm 5$  percentage points. For results based on the total sample of national adults in 2008, one can say with 95% confidence that the maximum margin of sampling error is  $\pm 3$  percentage points. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

October 30, 2008  
Electoral Process



*People have different opinions about the causes of the post-election conflict in Kenya. In your opinion, what do you think was the root cause of the conflict? Was it . . . ?*

Based on all Kenyans

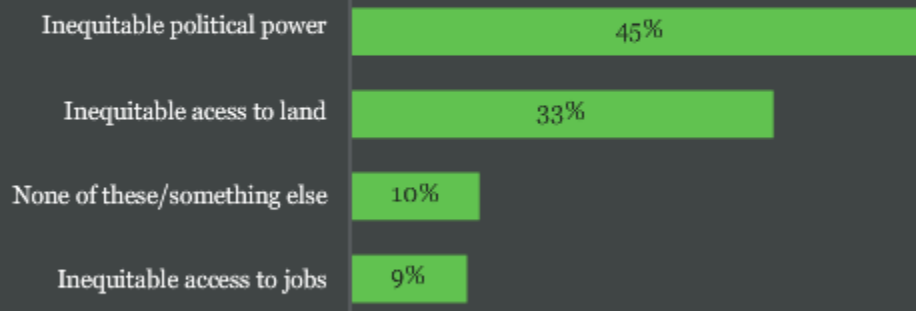


June-July 2008

GALLUP POLL

*People have different opinions about the causes of the post-election conflict in Kenya. In your opinion, what do you think was the root cause of the conflict? Was it . . . ?*

Based on all Kenyans

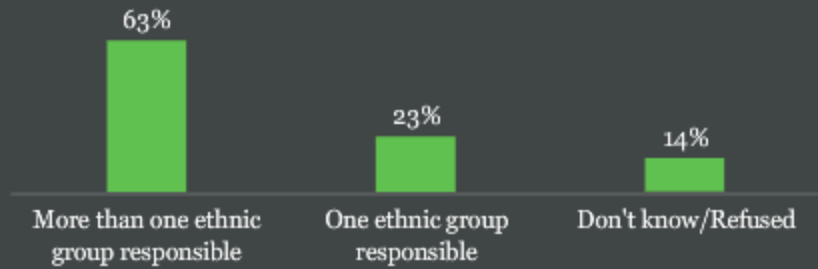


June-July 2008

GALLUP POLL

*Do you think there was one ethnic group that was responsible for/behind the post-election violence or the responsibility should be shared by more than one ethnic group?*

Based on all Kenyans

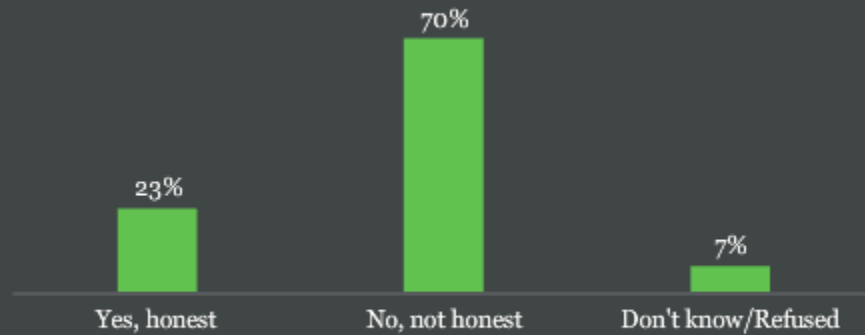


June-July 2008

GALLUP POLL<sup>®</sup>

*Do you believe the election was honest?*

Based on all Kenyans

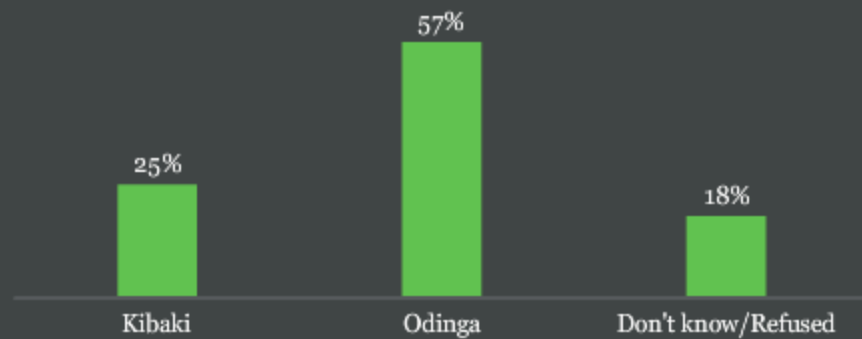


June-July 2008

GALLUP POLL<sup>®</sup>

*Whom do you believe won the election?*

Based on all Kenyans

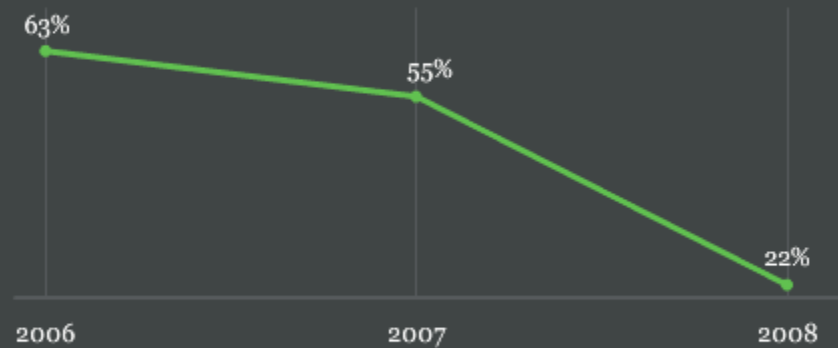


June-July 2008

GALLUP POLL

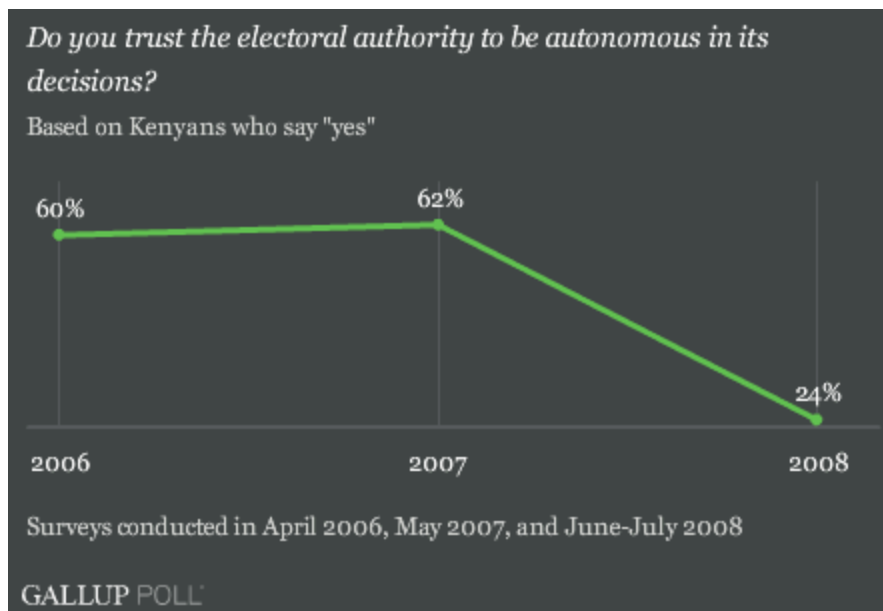
*In Kenya, do you have confidence in the honesty of elections?*

Based on all Kenyans who say "yes"



Surveys conducted in April 2006, May 2007, and June-July 2008

GALLUP POLL



Source: <http://www.gallup.com/poll/111637/Electoral-Process.aspx>

## Appendix 5: The problem of ethnic divide in Kenya

### Bridging ethnic and racial divides to foster national cohesion

Published On: **Mar 12, 2012**

Nairobi 12th March 2012...The National Cohesion and Intergration Commission (NCIC) in conjunction with UNDP and the Swedish Embassy today hosted the People's Conference on National Identity, Ethnicity and Race. Over 400 participants congregated in Nairobi to engage in regional diversity conversations to pave way for the cultivation of a harmonious, peaceful and tolerant nation based on common values as articulated in Chapter Two of the Constitution of Kenya.

The conference takes place against a background of ten (10) regional conversations on ethnicity and race facilitated from August 2011 to January 2012. This was intended to open up spaces for inter-community dialogue in order to enable the identifying of opportunities through which ethnic, racial and religious tolerance could be enhanced and entrenched in a sustainable manner. The forums were held in Nairobi, Kakamega, Kisumu, Njoro, Nyeri, Isiolo, Mombasa, Machakos, Lodwar and Garissa. The forums brought together key stakeholders from each of the regions including academia, civil society organizations, religious organizations and professional groups.

The forums also provided a platform where stakeholders explored possible solutions to ethnic, racial and religious tensions from academic and community perspectives. There is need to consolidate these issues that have emerged from the regions as they will inform a way forward for Kenya hence the hosting of the conference.



In his opening remarks Mr. Aeneas Chuma the UN Resident Coordinator noted that the conference will offer an important platform for creating a better inter-community understanding, reduce tension and increase trust across ethnic, racial and religious lines. He also emphasized the UN's role in supporting the investment in national peace infrastructures, "Let me reiterate that UNDP, and the United Nations System in Kenya as a whole, stays strongly committed to supporting national efforts to promote a peaceful and cohesive nation as part of a durable infrastructure for peace and stability. Political stability, social cohesion and economic prosperity are the fundamental cornerstones for sustainable development, including realization of Kenya's Vision 2030. UNDP will remain your trusted partner in this process and will continue to tirelessly work with you all for the benefit of the people of Kenya."

The key guest speaker, Hon. Raila Odinga, the Prime Minister asserted the need for maturity in political competition devoid of ethnic hatred. "We need to change our mindset from ethnic political alignment to issue based debates within party lines." The Prime Minister stressed the need for nationhood as he launched the NCIC national cohesion campaign dubbed "Kenya Kwanza" (Kenya First). This campaign intends to inculcate patriotism within Kenya focusing on a national identity as opposed to a community identity.



### **Focus of the People's Conference: National Identity, Ethnicity and Race**

In Kenya, ethnic and racial identity is perceived to be of more value than national identity due to feelings of exclusion from the state formation processes, human rights violations directed at communities, the politics of ethnic patronage, struggle for national resources, political betrayal and the absence of well understood national narratives of collective solidarity and shared moments of happiness and pain.

The previous concluded conversations in 10 locations were, thus, aimed at developing a common understanding on the gains and shortcomings towards the realization of peaceful coexistence in Kenya and create a deeper understanding of how a collective sense of "we-ness" can be cultivated in Kenya.

The People's Conference seeks to understand what Kenyans need to do in order to become more cohesive, despite their diverse backgrounds. What grievances, real and perceived, do communities have against the state and other communities and how can they be resolved?

The Conference will bring together statesmen, political elite, faith based organizations, private sector, community leaders, academia, civil society, Government and other opinion leaders to deliberate the importance of tolerance and explore how national cohesion could be accelerated.



The objectives of the People's Conference include: To generate ideas for an Ethnic and Race Relations Policy; Build on the common understanding from the regional dialogues of the gains and shortcomings towards the realization of peaceful coexistence in Kenya; Provide an academic resource of choice on ethnicity and race issues in Kenya; Create a deeper understanding of how a collective sense of 'wellness' can be cultivated in Kenya; Increase self-reflection, inquiry, and acceptance of inclusive practices at the individual, community and institutions of governance; Reinforce unity, cohesion, stability, security, development and performance of the nation-state in the service of citizens; Invite citizens to say what they feel and expect of the State and to share their happiness and pain candidly