Africa Development, Vol. XXXVI, No.1, 2011, pp. 13–28

(ISSN 0850-3907)

The Role of Economic Aspiration in Elections in Kenya

Okello Oculi*

Abstract

The violence that erupted, following the 30 December 2007 civic, parliamentary and presidential elections in Kenya is analysed as part of various historical continua anchored on social engineering by colonial officials who sought to control social change after the Mau Mau conflict. Presidents Jomo Kenyatta and Daniel arap Moi built on this colonial strategy for managing challenges by socialist and pro-democracy forces to their hold on power. Moi's regime had to combat challenges to his electoral fortunes from 1988 onwards and left behind a technology that was a useful investment for 2007/2008 opposition groups.

Both forms of social engineering gave prominence to tribalism as an organising tool. The power behind the success of these exercises was economic anxieties rooted in land, widespread unemployment and elite struggles for control of political influence. This perspective allows us to propose that stability in Kenya in the post-conflict period requires a bold counter-social engineering that breaks down efforts to continue the use of tribalism to prevent re-distribution of large landed estates in several parts of the country, particularly Coast and Central Provinces.

Résumé

Les violences qui ont éclaté à la suite des élections municipales, législatives et présidentielles qui ont eu lieu le 30 décembre 2007 au Kenya sont analysées dans le cadre de divers continuums historiques fondés sur l'ingénierie sociale de responsables coloniaux qui cherchaient à contrôler le changement social après le conflit mau-mau. Les Présidents Jomo Kenyatta et Daniel Arap Moi se sont inspirés de cette stratégie coloniale pour gérer les défis posés à leur maintien au pouvoir par les forces socialistes et prodémocratiques, respectivement. Le régime de Moi devait relever les défis à ses succès électoraux depuis 1988 et a délaissé une technologie que les groupes d'opposition pour 2007/2008 considéraient comme un investissement utile.

* Africa Vision 525 Initiative, Abuja, Nigeria.
Email: okelloоculi@yahoo.com; afvision525@yahoo.com

Ces deux formes d'ingénierie sociale ont mis en évidence le tribalisme en tant qu'outil d'organisation. La réussite de ces exercices était sous-tendue par les anxiétés économiques ancrées dans les problèmes fonciers, le chômage largement répandu et les luttes de l'élite pour le contrôle de l'influence politique. Cette perspective nous permet de dire que la stabilité au Kenya dans la période d'après-conflit requiert une contre-ingénierie sociale osée qui anéantit les tentatives de continuer à utiliser le tribalisme pour empêcher la redistribution de vastes domaines fonciers dans plusieurs régions du pays, en particulier dans les Provinces de la Côte et Centrale.

Introduction

The depth of the crisis that became linked to the 2007 general elections in Kenya, particularly the presidential component of it, as well as the enormous demands the crisis made on Africa's diplomatic resources, call for special attention. Such a focus may point to new elements that should capture our attention and give further depth to the views of those who insist that elections are not to be seen solely as a series of events, but as an integrative aspect of wider socio-economic and political dynamics in a society.

The suddenness, intensity and scale of the violence that swept Kenya, following nationally televised obstruction, by the opposition, of moves by the Electoral Commission of Kenya to declare manipulated results of the December 2007 presidential elections, was given more coverage and visibility by the international media than similar violence in 1988, 1992 and in the run-up to the 2002 elections when President Daniel arap Moi was in power.

The depth and scale of the conflict itself brought into the open similarities between the roots of the atavistic violence that had been witnessed in Sierra Leone and Liberia, where 'Creole' (or descendants of African returnees from the Caribbean, South America and North America) had monopolised political, administrative and economic power and excluded 'up-country' ethnic groups. The accompanying social relations of contempt for, and 'structural violence' against, the majority 'up-country' ethnic groups, had denied them a sense of common citizenship and generated latent wishes for violence as a form of income and a tool for seizing power from the Creole elites (Adebajo 2002). The Kenyan events raise the issue of similar relations of conflict being built over time by colonial and post-colonial rulers, and instructs that strategies for building democracy in Africa must include frank exposition of structures of conflict that underlie superstructural processes such as electoral competition for power. Accordingly, an attempt to study the post-election violence that hit Kenya with enormous volcanic eruptions and 'after-shocks' must be anchored on a historical narrative.

This article adopts a historical perspective, with focus on the impact of economic aspirations – rooted primarily in land ownership – and on orientations to elections as forms of social action in Kenya's polity. It draws attention to the need to go beyond the often propagandistic call for 'free and fair elections' in the challenge of nation building, and the need to build communal political systems in Africa.

Historical Legacy of Kenya's 2007 Elections

Kenya gained political independence in 1963 and, with it, inherited a conflict-anchored tradition of the intensive use of the colonial state for ensuring the political, social and economic welfare and prosperity of a dominant social group (the so-called European/White Settlers) that shared the same racial and/or kinship identity with the colonial rulers in Britain. This dominance over Kenya was achieved, sustained, ensured and protected by the state for over six decades, at the expense of the predominantly black population, with the most severe disadvantages afflicting those ethnic groups that had inhabited the most fertile agricultural lands (Okello 1976). The group that benefitted most from the colonial state had enjoyed a monopoly of direct access to officials of the colonial state who, though not directly answerable to them, were vulnerable to effective influences through their allies in the British parliament, British companies with interests in East Africa and high society social clubs. Two key resources that the state made available to the 'white settlers', who became economically productive in Kenya, were land and labour. Both land and labour were appropriated from indigenous communities through horrendous and permanent use of varieties of state and private violence, force and taxation (Clayton 2006). Over six decades, the 'white settler' group was increasingly recruited as functionaries of the state and acquired considerable experience in economic and political management, legislation and electoral politics.

To avoid the emergence of a rich, black African economic class that would become increasingly fired by economic nationalism (that would be translated into the kind of struggle for independence that the American colonies had unleashed against colonial control), an Asiatic racial group, drawn mainly from the Indian subcontinent, was imported into Kenya and became officially tolerated as a commercial class located one notch below British firms that controlled banking, agricultural estates and insurance, provided transport and communications services, and handled the retail trade in agricultural produce and the import sector. Under colonial governance, this intermediary racial group (whose citizenship was in a state of suspension) saw its interests as tied to those of the ruling racial group, while seeking to increase its numbers by drawing in more family members from India/Pakistan through immigration, and protecting its share of economic exploitation of the African population.

This political opportunism, in post-colonial Kenya, continues to be translated into behind-the-scenes funding of ruling-party candidates, with very limited open participation in seeking elective positions.

Independent Kenya also inherited the twin political traits of (1) a narrowly ethno-racially defined political class that, (2) 'completely consolidated its hold on state policy apparatus and used the same for advancing economic and political interests' (Okello and Owino 85:2006). The colonial racial political class also left a legacy of a lack of an inclusive orientation which, under challenge by elites from oppressed and exploited groups, had to be met with violent struggles to wrestle away that power 'so as to acquire development resources'. As noted by some analysts, in post-colonial Kenya, 'the notion of "it's our turn to eat" has thereby become the organising principle of national politics' (Kayinga 389:2006). It grew into a new variant of a violence-rooted and violence-generating political culture.

The Kenyatta and arap Moi Legacies (1963-2002)

President Jomo Kenyatta ruled Kenya from 1962 until his death in 1978. Daniel arap Moi, his political opponent turned vice-president from 1966, took over and ruled for 24 years, until 2002. In 1967, Kenyatta was reported in the *Sunday Times Magazine* (London) to have stated that his wish was to create an *aristocracy* in Kenya because that social class had ensured political stability for Britain. Colin Leys (1975) noted that soon after assuming power, Kenyatta began to systematically ignore and whittle down the role of the Kenya African National Union (KANU), the mass-based political party that brought him to power. Key policy-making and review structures of KANU (including the national conference of delegates representing local party branches), were allowed to fall into political irrelevance and wither away, while periodic elections within party branches and at the national centre also ceased. Kenyatta's government, however, conducted elections to parliament every five years, with selective electoral defeats of cabinet ministers and members of parliament who were seen as either short on loyalty or worryingly charismatic and effective mobilisers of popular support. Potential challengers for succession to the presidency became most vulnerable to being violently terminated. Following a rift over public policies, the first vice-president, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, and cabinet minister Achieng Oneko, were detained, while their opposition party, the Kenya Peoples Union (KPU), was banned just before the elections of 1967. The opposition's call for the redistribution of land taken back from white settlers, to the hundreds of thousands of landless veterans of the Mau Mau armed struggle, had generated panic in Kenyatta's governing circle.

The emerging political authoritarianism, itself a continuation of colonial dictatorship, subsequently became a useful tool for achieving the twin goals of using state power to ensure disproportional accumulation of economic resources in the hands of a Kikuyu, Embu and Meru elite, and of suppressing pressures to end poverty by redistributing land previously controlled by white settlers and foreign-owned multinational corporations. Kenyatta openly called on landless people who had fought in the anti-colonial Mau Mau war to 'suffer without bitterness'. Just as the colonial state had used the administrative apparatus to ensure the brutalised silence of the disadvantaged classes, Kenyatta also relied on provincial and district administrators, directly appointed by him and expected to be loyal to him, to stamp out protests and agitation in their areas of administration. The termination of the nefarious role of these officials in rigging elections at constituency level against opponents and critics of governments (under Kenyatta, Moi and Mwai Kibaki), became a key demand in the contentious constitution-reform referendum of 2005.

Under the Moi regime, the post-colonial state in Kenya administered state-enhanced poverty characterised by lack of access to land for the landless, massive flight of the landless from rural poverty to the unemployment-based informal economic sector congregated in rapidly expanding urban slums, and the use of state resources to empower the post-independence Kalenjin elite. This anti-poor people stance was in line with Kenyatta's use of state funds (loaned by the British government as part of the negotiated independence package) to purchase land from white farmers and distribute it to top civil servants and members of parliament under the so-called 'low-density' (or large estates) scheme.

In the run-up to independence, the British colonial government had also adopted a strategy of planting inter-ethnic conflict in the Rift Valley, Western and Coast Provinces through a 're-settlement scheme' in which landless Kikuyu, Kissii and other ethnic groups were given loans to buy farms (either as individuals or as cooperative groups), from white settlers in these provinces. The Kalenjin, Luhya and Taita groups, who regard the land as their ancestral heritage, saw the situation as a new form of internal land colonisation by 'Black Settlers'.

On assuming power, President arap Moi openly declared that his ideology was that of '*nyayo*' (or faithfully following the footsteps of Kenyatta). This translated into control of state power being taken away from the Kikuyu and their ethnic allies, the Embu and Meru, and putting it in the hands of Moi's Kalenjin ethnic kith and kin and their allies in pre-independence politics. Kenyatta had concentrated power in the hands of his Kikuyu ethnic elites. As an example, while in 1976 Kenyatta ruled with 50 per cent of provincial administrators drawn from the Kikuyu ethnic group (with none drawn from the Luhya and Kamba), at the peak of Moi's rule in 2000, the Kikuyu held only

13 per cent of such positions (with the Luhya and smaller ethnic allies of the Kalenjin holding 26 per cent). Kayinga (2006:354) has proposed that because (according to the 1989 population census) the top five ethnic groups in Kenya are numerically close (Kikuyu 21 %; Luhya 14 %; Luo 12 %; Kamba 11 % and Kisii 6 %), there is a sense of insecurity in politicians seeking power that encourages an intensive appeal to ethnic loyalty both within the group that controls power and in those seeking access to state power. The anxiety may be heightened by the fact that out of a population of 42 ethnic groups, 32 of them constitute a mere 14 per cent of the total population, while the top five ethnic groups constitute 70 per cent. Making an electoral alliance solely with the 32 ethnic minorities, therefore, has little strategic merit.

None of the big five groups would be able to win political power by making broad, issue-based ideological appeals to the smaller ethnic groups. Primary focus tends to be on ensuring solid capture of home ethnic votes and negotiating deals with the other four rival ethnic groups. Such negotiations would revolve around securing patronage benefits for members of one's ethnic base, thereby giving high value to the posts of cabinet ministers, junior ministers, chairmen of boards of public corporations and managing directors of these institutions. In 1991, President Moi could assert the Kalenjin's hold on power by ensuring that they held a total of 70 top positions in public corporations, while the Kikuyu held 47, the Luo 37, the Luhya 30, and the Kamba 24. The 34 minority ethnic groups held a mere 29 posts (Kayinga 2006:391). Building a trans-ethnic, collectivist and social justice-based political culture therefore remains a major challenge.

The Challenge of Corruption

Anyang Nyong'o, and others have accused President Moi of giving access to economic resources held within public institutions, including parastatals, to the Kalenjin ethnic group and their allies, but fatally failing to follow Kenyatta's dictum that beneficiaries must ensure economic productivity within the framework of state control of significant shares of the economy (Sessional Paper Number 10, 1965). Institutions whose top positions were targets of ethno-political patronage, were recklessly looted and paralysed as economic production units, thereby forcing others into corruption and throwing many out of employment. This explosion of 'personalisation' of public institutions also led to the invasion of land allocated to public institutions. The Ndungu Report, for example, showed that land owned by the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute was given out to 229 individuals; land belonging to the Kenya Pipeline Company 'allocated' to 31 persons; land owned by Kenya Industrial Estates allocated to 572 individuals; while land along which a 'by-pass' road around central Nairobi was to be built, was allocated to 106 persons. The economic

principle of 'primitive accumulation' by which 'white settlers' on arriving in Kenya had grabbed vast tracts of land at rates as low as 10 British pence an acre, was thus replayed and extended to rob and ruin public institutions in post-colonial Kenya (Ndungu Report 2006:24-41). With the records showing which officials allocated the land, it was easy for the general public to link this land grabbing and accumulation to ethnic patronage networks. It therefore, aroused intense bitterness among groups excluded from being beneficiaries; moreso since they lacked avenues for obtaining redress. In the face of such economic circumstances, the value put on achieving electoral victory for both challengers and incumbents escalated astronomically.

Kenyatta and Moi had partially avoided the imperative of redistributing land to the landless in the core Kikuyu Central Province. This was either land seized from Mau Mau fighters as the conflict lasted or landed properties allocated to those considered loyal to the colonial government. Both presidents, in the main, adopted the terminal post-Mau Mau colonial policy of settling the landless, mainly Kikuyu, on land bought from white settlers in Masai, Luhya and Kalenjin areas in the Western and the Rift Valley Provinces. In Kiambu District, Kenyatta's home-base, only 234 persons benefited from the 'settlement scheme' that provided land for purchase by the landless, thereby ensuring that most large estates remained intact. Less politically-favoured Kikuyu districts (according to Kenyatta's plan for creating a landed Kikuyu aristocracy) experienced more land reallocation – Nyeri District, the epicentre of the Mau Mau armed struggle, got 25,028 reallocations while Thika and Muranga had 3,043 and 2,139 respectively. In contrast, while 46,814 beneficiaries got land in the Rift Valley Province, there were 69,697 beneficiaries in Coast Province and a total of 30,444 in Central Province.

This practice deepened on-going bitterness as 'primary' displaced owners expected to enjoy the premier option in recovering ownership. Moi exploited this emergent condition of 'tertiary structural violence' (the primary one having been the armed robbery of land by white settlers and the state during colonial conquest), by inciting ethnic violence against the predominantly Kikuyu, Kissii and other beneficiaries of these "Settlement Schemes" (Okello 2007).

The Ndungu Report gives the number of beneficiaries from these schemes between 1962 and 2002. The Justice Akiwumi Commission of Inquiry noted the following comment by a contented British colonial official on the conflict-generating policy of land settlement that colonial officials had introduced in the run-up to Kenya's independence:

> Inter-tribal tensions increased markedly as the year wore on. The Kalenjin make no secret of the fact that they are stock-piling native arms against the inevitable day probably after independence, when they will have to fight the

Kikuyu and perhaps the Luo for control of their own areas, including the upper and middle Rift. The tribal antipathies are now so great on some farms that the Kalenjin members of the Agricultural Workers Union would refuse to take part in a union strike alongside Kikuyu members and would automatically take the opposite line in any controversy (Akiwumi 1999:116).

Table 1: Settlement Schemes at Root of Post-2007 Election Violence

Province	District	Time Period	No. of Beneficiaries
Western	Mt. Elgon	2000	3,022
	Lugari	1963-2002	4,142
Rift Valley	Uasin Gishu	1963-1998	7,891
	Trans-Nzoia	1968-1998	11,738
	Nandi	1962-1982	1,085
	Nakuru	1967-2001	13,509
	Laikipia	1967-1993	5,890
	Bomet/Kericho	1962-1967	3,120
	Boringo/Koibatek	1964-1996	3,581
Nyanza	South Nyamira	1962-1967	1,477
	Kisumu	1964-2002	5,164
Coast	Kilifi	1977-2000	6,872
	Kwale	1962-1995	11,699
	Lamu	1978-1996	5,694
	Tana River	1996	988
	Malindi	1982-1999	10,905
	Mombasa	1999-2001	24,711
	Taita Tavera	1982-2000	8,828
Central	Kiambu	1964-2001	234
	Muranga	1967 & 1971	2,139
	Thika	1969-2000	3,043
	Nyandarua	1963-1993	25,028
	Nyeri	1962-1999	4,851
Eastern	Machakos	1963-1971	4,989
	Makueni	1971-1999	39,754
	Meru	1966-1982	3,253

Source: Republic of Kenya, Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Illegal/Irregular Allocation of Public Land, Annexes Vol. 1, Government Printer, Nairobi, pp. 855-875

It was, therefore, not surprising that bitterness about the prospect of President Mwai Kibaki staying in power (and thereby, the assumed continuing protection of the Kikuyu's control of state resources and their use as tools for acquiring economic resources), was likely to provoke widespread violence in the provinces where 'tertiary structural violence' had been entrenched.

President Moi and Privatisation

Okello and Owino (2006:92) have argued that specific effects of privatisation as a key component of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), introduced as early as 1980, increased poverty in Kenya. Trade liberalisation as a key component of SAP brought enormous increases in the volume of cheaper food items imported into Kenya's markets. This crippled market access for local producers and middlemen, thereby deepening losses of income. Maize imports, for example, jumped from 12,000 to 650,000 tonnes in 1994 while rice imports rose from 37,000 to 93,000 tonnes.

The effect of loss of internal and regional markets combined with 'retrenchments' of workers from government jobs (the latter as a stipulation by SAP), to reduce wage employment from a high 90 per cent in 1972 to a mere 37 per cent in 1996. Correspondingly, the informal sector of the economy increased from employing only 10 per cent of the working population in 1972 to employing 70 per cent in 1996 of those earning incomes. Put side by side with the SAP stipulation that Kenya's government should return to the colonial government's strategy of avoiding the responsibility of providing social services (health and education) to the mass of the population and pushing it to local communities and families, their combined effect intensified the rate of impoverishment of the poor in urban and rural sectors. This demand on the Kenyan state was bound to arouse an intensifying sense of loss of legitimacy along with hostility to whoever was in control of state power; and moreso against the ethnic group whose elites were perceived to be benefiting from power and percolating it down the ethnic patronage chain. These hostile energies would be fed into electoral behavior.

Crisis in Education and Election Violence 2007

Kenya's education sector was a victim of a colonial legacy of unequal access by ethnic groups and growing impoverishment of the disadvantaged. One indicator was the disparity in the percentage of children who completed primary school education. Between 1999 and 2004, while Central Province (predominantly Kikuyu) achieved an average of 80 per cent completion rate, North Eastern Province (mainly home to sparsely populated Turkana and Somali minority groups) achieved only 27 per cent; Nyanza Province came second with 75 per cent, Western Province 66 per cent, Rift Valley 69 per

cent, and Eastern Province 67 per cent, respectively. Higher up the ladder, Kenya's universities could admit only 5 per cent of graduates of secondary schools in 1999, with a small increase to 6 per cent in 2003 (Wainana 2006:173). In the 1999/2000 academic year, a total of 30,243 students achieved the qualifying grade for entering university. Less than 6,000 got admission. The others most probably flowed into the turbulent and often poverty-ridden world of the 70 per cent who found employment in the informal sector.

The combination of those who failed to complete primary school and those who failed to enter universities would be expected to constitute a pool of potentially frustrated, disoriented and angry young persons. They would be expected to be available for recruitment for forms of electoral politics that blame an ethnic group's perceived misfortunes, deprivations and socio-economic failures on assumed ethnic enemies (Adebajo:2002). To this must be added the historical reality that 'some areas of the country such as North-Eastern, and parts of Nyanza, Western, Coast and Eastern Provinces are poorer and have much lower indicators of life expectancy, health facilities, safe water, sanitation, communication and transportation' (Okello and Owino: 2005). From 1966 when Oginga Odinga and thirty members of parliament formed the Kenya People's Union (KPU) to protest about Kenyatta's policies and to defeat the ruling Kenya African National Union (KANU) in the impending 1967 general elections, this geography of poverty became the primary focus of inter-ethnic struggles for power. This politicized ethnicisation of poverty would lead to highly visible political violence.

The Luo ethnic group was on the receiving end of inter-elite politically-motivated violence. In 1969, Tom Mboya, a charismatic political campaigner and past trade union leader, was assassinated in broad daylight on a Nairobi street at peak shopping time. His ethnic Luo people saw his death as the culmination of a Kikuyu plot to block his ambition to succeed the ailing Kenyatta. In 1986, Kenya's Foreign Minister, Robert Ouko, another charismatic Luo politician, was also assassinated. His murder was also seen as a plan to end his prospects of succeeding President Moi who had survived a 1982 military coup and whose leadership was associated with Raila Odinga, also a Luo.

The political rift between the Luo and the Kalenjin is partly traceable to political lobbying by white settler politicians led by Michael Blundel and Bruce Mackenzie, who applied the familiar device, used in all de-colonising countries, of arousing fears in minority groups in Kenya about impending domination by larger ethnic groups after colonial rule had ended. The Kalenjin leader, Daniel arap Moi, was a prime target for efforts to stop the nationalist

momentum of alliance between Luo and Kikuyu politicians. This alliance was later torn apart when Kenyatta was persuaded to draw in the leadership of ethnic minorities if he was to avoid electoral defeat of his policy of building a local aristocracy at the expense of the landless and the unemployed. The political class around Kenyatta turned to borrowing a social technology that Mau Mau fighters had used with enormous effect, namely, building solidarity among Kikuyu fighters by administering oaths of secrecy and loyalty to hundreds of thousands of Kikuyu. Politicians competed over numbers of truckloads of people from their constituencies brought to oath-taking rituals. It was a strategy which sought to wield the power of ethnic conflict over that of class conflict. The Luo were defined as enemies who were out to take power away from the House of Mumbi (the Kikuyu). The Kikuyu must unite to fight them. The fact that the Luo do not have circumcision as rite of passage into adulthood was exploited as a factor that disqualified their men from holding leadership over "true men". This new political culture of ethnic warfare would finally explode on a much wider scale after the 30 December 2007 elections.

The Mwai Kibaki – Raila Odinga Deal

It could be argued that Mwai Kibaki and Raila Odinga both came into Kenya's politics with debts to collect. Although Kibaki was the first student to earn a First Class Bachelor's degree in Economics and Political Science at the prestigious Makerere University College (at the time a College of London University), he had been humiliated by the 'Kiambu' political group around Kenyatta by being appointed a junior minister to Tom Mboya, a secondary school graduate. This slap on Kibaki's face was said to be due to his coming from Nyeri District, home of the leader of the Mau Mau revolution, Dedan Kimathi. It was noted by British colonial officials that the largely youthful leaders who had launched the Mau Mau revolution had reacted with much scorn when Kenyatta returned from England and proposed an anti-colonial strategy based on holding tea-party negotiations with colonial officials in Kenya, as opposed to their preference for armed struggle (Nottingham 2007). It is noteworthy that Nyeri was the only town whose municipal authorities declined to name their central street after Kenyatta, but instead, gave that honour to their 'son of the soil', Dedan Kimathi. In 2007, Kibaki also surprised Kenyans by unveiling a sculpture of a combative Dedan Kimathi in the centre of downtown Nairobi. During the dedication ceremony, Kibaki told the crowd that his own blood brother had died fighting in the Mau Mau revolution. Perhaps Kibaki is driven by a secret ambition to use his presidency to reverse Kenyatta's vision of building a Kiambu-based aristocracy in

Kenya. That would have driven him towards seeking a collision-prone but constitutionally legitimate two-term tenure.

Raila Odinga is the son of Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, the Luo trader-politician who had fallen from being the leader of the nationalist struggle to serving term in detention and getting banned from electoral politics by Kenyatta. The latter was the direct beneficiary of Odinga's noble struggle – when the outgoing British Governor invited Odinga to become Kenya's first post-colonial Prime Minister, he had insisted that Kenyatta must be freed from prison to lead Kenya into *Uhuru* or independence. The politically charged deaths of Tom Mboya and Robert Ouko (both younger than Oginga Odinga) had given birth to a widely broadcast dictum that 'a Luo will never be president of Kenya'. Raila had come into politics with that 'glass ceiling' to crack. In 2002, he was confronted with the reality of contesting against Moi's chosen successor, Uhuru Kenyatta, while all non-Kikuyu politicians chose to vote for Mwai Kibaki, a Kikuyu who had turned against his political alliance with Moi. Not supporting Kibaki would have run the risk of pushing Kikuyu voters into alliance with Moi's Kalenjin votes. This political barrier was crossed at the price of getting Kibaki to promise to hold office for only one five-year term, while cabinet posts and other patronage-based public office would be equitably shared out among the various ethnic groups that would vote for him. Kayinga reports what would become a key theme in Raila Odinga's campaign in the run-up to the 2007 elections:

> The government that was formed after the election (2002) did not reflect this understanding to the letter. The president's own ethnic party plus his own political party got some of the most key ministries both in the Cabinet and in the civil services. Appointments of permanent secretaries appeared to favour the Kikuyu and the Meru than any other group. Out of 25 permanent secretaries, 11 were from the Kikuyu and Meru ethnic groups…..Other large ethnic groups had about 2 each (Kayinga 2006:393).

Kibaki, a man who had been in government since 1962, was criticised for being too deeply rooted in the politics of ethnic dominance to embrace effective reform towards equity politics. Raila, on his part, had younger politicians biting at his heels, their eyes fixed on overtaking him in the race to succeed Kibaki. More worrying for his political allies was the prospect of Kikuyu, Embu and Meru elites (who had under Moi's regime lost power to the Kalenjin alliance), rebuilding their economic base and consolidating their 'ethno-mafia' politics. The election campaign rhetoric of the Odinga-led Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) contained bitter accusations of pre-election plots to sell majority shares of key public enterprises (like Safaricom, a mobile telecoms provider with eastern African outreach) to favoured ethnic elites. Such a

consolidation of Kikuyu economic power was likened by ODM campaign rhetoric to the situation in post-apartheid South Africa in which black Africans won political power in 1994 but the economic power remained in the hands of the minority whites. A sense of panic had been built into the election campaign. The power of this panic was reflected in comments in a document used for the campaign in the anti-government constitution referendum thus:

> There is an overwhelming feeling among the non-GEMA (Gikuyu, Embu and Meru Association) communities that the Kikuyu are selfish bigots dedicated to a tribal hegemony and will never share the spoils of government with other communities (Kabukuru 2008:21).

This sense of panic was also fanned by a record of high performance by Kibaki from 2002 to 2007. The media reported improvements in access to funds for small-scale businesses and the rehabilitation of institutions that allowed this economic group to increase their incomes (PNU 2007). This was particularly evident in the dairy sector, and tea and coffee production. The return to 'free' primary school education nationwide, a policy first implemented by Kenyatta's government, had earned Kibaki considerable support. Another source of growing legitimacy was Kibaki's retreat from the brutal authoritarian culture of the Moi era. Mazrui (2008:16-17) wrote as follows:

> Although inter-party relations in Kenya subsequently deteriorated, the Kibaki regime created a more open society. The Press became much freer, both printed and electronic, in spite of periodic harassment by the police. Preventive detention of political opponents became more and more rare, though Muslims were targeted more often. The government encouraged an annual accountability of performance in human rights, including the equivalent of National Ombudsman, in Kenya. The Kibaki regime attempted to deal with judicial corruption by sacking certain judges. President Kibaki vetoed parliamentary legislation which would have forced reporters and journalists to disclose their sources for stories about corruption. The particular veto by President Kibaki put Kenya ahead of the United States in the protection of the sources of journalists and reporters.

The main exception was each time Kibaki's government was sporadically challenged by *mungiithi* terrorism. In the run-up to the elections, for example, the police may have slaughtered over eighty members of the group in response to fatal attacks on policemen and *matatu* (small bus) drivers, and others.

A Nairobi newspaper noted that a phenomenon colloquially known as '*accidenting*' political opponents had apparently vanished from governance. The term '*accidenting*' referred to deaths of known critics of government

through planned motor vehicle accidents. An early victim was Ronald Ngala, a key ally of arap Moi in the leadership of the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU), the political party that championed a federal constitution (or '*majimboism'*) as a safeguard for the interests of minority ethnic groups.

All these elements were likely to win growing political legitimacy and support for Kibaki and, accordingly, erode the anger and hunger to be churned up by the opposition into a winning source of political and electoral support.

Displaced Aggression

President Kenyatta was an accomplished anthropologist. His commitment to the creation of an aristocracy to run Kenya as a stable polity was severely shaken by the Mau Mau armed struggle which threatened to bring the angry and violent underclass, and 'levelers' of inequality to power. The defeat of the movement by British military power combined, with a plan to create landed gentry with control of political power, provided an opportunity to turn Kikuyu social values, particularly their notions of achieving manhood through enduring raw pain at circumcision, into a tool for political solidarity and competition against other ethnic groups. By a twist of history, the horrendous, widespread and long-lasting violence used by British police and troops against hundreds of thousands of Kikuyu detainees held in concentration camps during the Mau Mau armed struggle, and the forced labour inflicted on men and women in villages, could be presented as a form of collective circumcision and rite of passage into political domination of Kenya. A process of orchestrated socio-ethnic drama in which Kikuyu, Embu and Meru adults would take oaths to commit themselves to keeping political power against challenges by the Luo, provided a medium for this 'conversion' of collective trauma under colonial oppression into a form of religious rebirth (Likimani 2004).

The import of the phenomenon was the strategic displacement of class aggression in the political consciousness of impoverished Kikuyu and Luo ethnic groups away from 'combating intra-Kikuyu and intra-Luo class exploitation into mutual inter-ethnic and classless aggression'. Intra-Kikuyu class conflict had been a significant component of the Mau Mau struggle. Ngugi wa Thiong'o has presented it in several of his literary works as the struggle between revolutionaries and a 'home guard' of 'comprador' collaborators who served as allies of British forces. This situation has increasingly deepened political silence about intra-ethnic inequalities in the political rhetoric of leaders of Kenya's major political parties (Thiong'o 2007).

This matter has assumed dramatic dialectical relevance as the vast majority of the 650,000 displaced victims of post-election violence need to be

reintegrated into the land from which they had been evicted, mainly in the Rift Valley and Western Provinces. The knotty problem that the 'coalition government' of the Party of National Unity (PNU) and the opposition ODM must confront is the matter of redistributing land owned by beneficiaries of Kenyatta's 'landed aristocracy' policy who are to be found on both sides of the political divide. Failure to confront this economic wall is likely to give full reign to the manipulation of ethnicity, igniting inter-ethnic violence to divert focus away from intra-ethnic class-based inequalities, poverty and injustices. It also leaves land-based 'structural violence' inherited as a legacy and reality from colonial rule deeply entrenched in Kenya's polity, a socio-economic bomb ever ready to be exploded.

Conclusion

It is important to use historical analysis of the economic condition of Kenya to get to the roots of the horrendous violence that shredded the country's social and economic fabric after the 2007 elections. We have looked at conflict-generating racial and ethnic relations over land; conflict-generating failures of the educational sector; conflict-generating growth of poverty as a result of the implementation of Structural Adjustment Policies (SAP); and conflict-generating use of state power for grabbing access to economic resources as well as undermining civic morality by 'personalising' public institutions.

We have indicated how creative responses by politicians to electoral challenges left Kenya's leaders unable to escape the hold of a brutal colonial legacy of using the state as an instrument for entrenching 'structural violence' in relations over land; promotion of economic prosperity for a racial or ethnic group at the cost of deepening the impoverishment of others; domination, neo-genocide and dehumanisation of opposition ethnic 'others'. President Kenyatta's novel vision of creating an ethnic aristocracy increasingly led him into integrating Kikuyu ethnic solidarity with conflictual relations with Luo challengers for political power. The assassination of Tom Mboya, J.M. Kariuki, Pio Gama Pinto, and probably Ronald Ngala, gave a new dimension to inter-elite political violence as a tool of governance. This integration of violence into inter-ethnic electoral competition increasingly assumed widespread use from 1988 to 2007 (Akiwumi 1999).

Ethnic-based administration also facilitated a level of economic corruption that, under the Moi regime, crippled and eroded public institutions. Sustained accusations by the opposition of corruption in Kibaki's government competed for public attention with official efforts to fight it. Corruption intensified inter-ethnic conflict as it threatened the economic security of its victims.

The merit of this perspective is that it locates the issue of conflict beyond the mere absence of physical violence and highlights the value of building friendship relations at interpersonal levels in nation building.

Petro Nenni once accused Charles de Gaulle of doing 'great harm to Europe' by defending French 'particularism', thereby retarding Europe's unity and progress towards building a counterweight power to the United States and the Soviet Union (Fallaci 1976:258). Kenyatta and the white settler lobby around him were accused of inhibiting the realisation of the East African Federation, including possible collusion in the 1971 military coup against Milton Obote's government in Uganda that escalated into its collapse. It could be argued that a wider East African political space may have dispersed the political and economic ambitions of Kenya's elites and limited the power of reliance on ethnic votes and patronage networks.

References

Adebajo, A., 2002, *Building Peace in West Africa: Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau*, International Peace Academy Occasional Paper Series, Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner.

Clayton, Anthony, 2006, *The Killing Fields of Kenya 1952-1960: British Military Operations against the Mau Mau,* Nairobi: Transafrica Press.

Kabukuru, W., 2008, 'Kenya: What Went Wrong', *New African*, February 1.

Leys, C., 1975, *Underdevelopment in Kenya: The Practical Economy of Neo-colonialism,* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Likimani, M., 2004[reprint], *Passbook Number F. 47927: Women & Mau Mau in Kenya,* New York: Praeger Publishers.

Mazrui, A.A., 2008, 'From Obote to Obama: Stages Towards a 75th Anniversary', *Mazrui Newsletter No. 32,* Spring.

Nottingham, J., 2006, Personal Communication, Nairobi.

Okello, D. and Owino, K., 2005, 'Socio-Economic Context of Governance in Kenya', in Abdallah Bujra (ed.), *Democratic Transition in Kenya: The Struggle from Liberal to Social Democracy*, Nairobi: African Centre for Economic Growth.

PNU, 2007, *Kibaki Tena, Kazi iendelee,* Campaign Brochure.

Thiong'o, N. w., 2006, *Wizard of the Crow, Nairob*i, Kampala, Dar es Salaam: East African Educational Publishers.

Republic of Kenya, 1999, *Report of the Judicial Commission Appointed to Inquire into Tribal Clashes in Kenya,* 1st July.

Wassermann, G., 1976, *Politics of decolonization: Kenya Europeans and the Land Issue 1960-1965,* Cambridge: CVP.