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Ethnicity and Politics in Kenya's Turbulent Path to Democracy and Development

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Abstract

This article examines the manifestation of ethnicity in Kenyan politics and its impact on Kenya's democratic path and development. It questions the salience of ethnicity in politics and traces the origin of ethnic consciousness to the colonial era. Efforts by the successive regimes to advance a national identity have proved futile as all of them have worked to calcify it through its exploitation and politicization. We utilize an intersection of theoretical approaches to zoom in on the overwhelming nature of ethnicity in politics. The crux of our argument is that ethnicity has, over time, been used for by the self-aggrandizing political elite for self-serving interests and it is our opinion that the historic handshake between President Uhuru Kenyatta and the former Prime Minister Raila Odinga provided another unique opportunity for de-ethicising Kenya's politics and for strengthening the existing institution.

Keywords

Ethnicity • Ethnic identity • Politicisation of ethnicity • Kenya • Democracy

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Before 2007-2008, Kenya was among the few African countries that for a long period of time had enjoyed significant amounts of quiescence since independence. This was extraordinary going by the quantity of political violence, protracted conflicts and civil wars that had occurred in the continent. However, Kenya had also seen its share of turbulent times that began as soon as the country attained independence under the Kenyatta regime (1963-1978). This period was largely characterized by the suppression of plural democracy resulting in a one-party state, political assassinations and monopolization of the media by the state (Osaghae, 1994). In 1978, Moi's regime took over and furthered Kenyatta's machinations with some enhanced degree of brutality a situation that triggered what came to be known as the clamor for multi-party democracy from the early 1980s. By the early 1990s, the clamor gained momentum and transmogrified into open rebellion, and an ethicised brand of politics due to the marginalization of some ethnic groups (Throup & Hornsby, 1998).

The political climate of the 1990s served to put the country in a dangerous political path that was against democratic values. For example, the banning of political rallies as well as debates on multi-party democracy led to political and ethnic bigotry. Pockets of political violence and ethnic clashes, therefore, continued but were significantly ignored by political leaders at the helm of leadership who were focused on self-aggrandizement and in turn worked to portray a false picture of a peaceful country yet ethnic tensions were simmering.

In 2007, the post-election violence that ensued in the wake of divisive presidential elections highlighted the extent of the ethnic divisions that had largely been ignored in the past as the country stood at the precipice of a civil war. The human cost was enormous with over 1000 people losing their lives in less than two months and hundreds of thousands being displaced. Yet, the violence also revealed the deeply entrenched structural decay that engulfed the country: from the dysfunctional electoral institution, the insidious culture of impunity, ethnicization of politics and power to imperious presidency and corruption (GoK 2008; 22-36).

In 2008, after the restoration of peace by the panel of eminent personalities led by the late Koffi Anan, Kenya was presented with an opportunity to begin a new chapter of robust constitutional and institutional reforms: packaged in a four-item agenda paper. Although some significant achievements were

registered - promulgation of the new constitution in 2010, reconstitution of the electoral body as well as other institutions like the judiciary and police - the country was still faced by the almost similar challenges of 2007 during the 2013 general elections.

In the 2017 elections, the country was in another political dilemma after the results of the elections were nullified by the Supreme Court judges led by Chief Justice David Maraga, citing deep irregularities and utter mendacity. The country was again at the precipice until 9th March 2018 when the historic symbolic 'handshake' between President Uhuru Kenyatta and former Prime Minister Raila Odinga took place. In their speeches, grand corruption, ethnicity, and ethnicized politics were among the issues that these two leaders identified as having adverse effects on the country's social, political and economic development.

The question as to why ethnicity has influenced political contest in Kenya, as well as its effect on the distribution (economic) of resources and nation-building (social), remains at the pinnacle of this paper. We, therefore, hinge our discussions on why ethnic politics has calcified over time as well as the analogy of such ethnic laden political arena together with its multiplying factor of ethnic identity which is used instrumentally by political leaders for self-serving purposes. Our findings indicate that although strides are being made towards tackling ethnicity and ethnicized politics, ethnicity has been used and it is still being used instrumentally to further political interest and to perpetuate economic crimes like corruption. The corollary is under development which is palpable in various regions, the politicization of ethnicity as well as ethnicization of politics. We conclude that although there is some kind of progress, Kenya is yet again presented with an opportunity to strengthen its institutions as a prerequisite of consolidating its democracy.

Theoretical Perspectives

The intersection between ethnicity and politics in ethnically divided societies - such as those in Sub-Saharan Africa - was a matter of academic dialogue long before multi-party democracy took center stage in African countries. In this segment, we explore a number of theories relating to ethnicity which we use as the theoretical milieu upon which the manifestation of ethnicity in Kenyan politics can be construed.

Theorizing ethnicity is almost impossible without an understanding of what constitutes an ethnic group. According to Smith (1991), an ethnic group is a community whose members share a collective proper name, the myth of common ancestry, shared historical memory, common culture, sense of solidarity and a specific homeland. In this sense, ethnicity becomes a relational notion that derives from a group of people. This perspective is corroborated by Young & Turner (1985), who argue that the relational conceptualization is often portrayed in terms of 'we' and 'they'/ 'us and them' whereby 'we' assigns positive attributes to themselves while disparaging the 'they' group. Kasfir (1976) posits that most of the attributes of ethnic groups like territory, culture, and language are objective and as such, they are visible to both members and non-members of the group as salient markers of identity which are often used as pedestals for political mobilization.

Ethnic communities are, however, not static and they transmogrify with time. Young (1976) posits that both the attributes and the composition of ethnic groups are not fixed and are not ubiquitous across all ethnic groups. In one situation attributes such as cultural values, symbols, language or territory could be palpable while in another, some of these attributes could be lacking. Therefore, the extent to which these attributes become the defining characteristics of ethnic groups differs in relation to prevailing circumstances (Young, 1976).

There are four broad schools of thought which have emerged in a bid to define and analyze ethnicity. They include the primordial, instrumentalists, constructivists and situationists. The primordial school argues that ethnicity is an old and permanent set of fixed identity acquired at birth from the clan-kinship structure of the society (Geertz, 1963; Isaacs, 1975; Stack, 1986). Between the 1950s and 1960s ethnicity in developing countries, especially those in Africa, was viewed and analyzed through the prism of the primordialists. This was anchored on the logic that political behavior in such countries was motivated by instincts and emotions deriving from ancestral relationships (Brown, 2000). However, an attempt to depict ethnicity as a peculiar phenomenon of developing countries was disputed by a number of scholars. Stones (1983), posits that some countries, e.g. Bulgaria, that emerged in Europe in the 20th century proved that ethnic nationalism was not a confine of African countries.

Another intriguing argument that claimed that primordial tendencies were a preserve of the rural masses and that the western educated African political elites were immune to such tendencies was developed in the late 1960s. It was aimed at portraying the primordial attributes as staggering attributes which could be erased through the modernization process in which western educated elites had been exposed to (Brown, 2000). This notion is disputed by the very fact that ethnicity is an entangling phenomenon that renders ethnic sensibility of both the elite and the masses comparable. Horowitz (1985) contends that social mobilizations augment ethnic competitions and since the political elites find themselves at the helm of such competitions, they are most likely to exploit ethnic affiliations for their expedience (Horowitz, 1985).

The instrumentalists' school provides another basis for defining and analyzing ethnicity. It holds that ethnicity becomes a salient defining principle when groups are in competition for values as well as scarce natural and resources (Young & Turner, 1985). In essence, ethnic identity is construed as a significant attribute which members of an ethnic group can use to seek favors from the nation-state or use it to fight for recognition or to eliminate deprivations which are believed to be politically induced. All these become manifest in contests for political power.

Access to political power is an important reality to most ethnic groups in Africa due to the perceived privileges that go hand in hand with political power. This perception provides an incentive for individuals and ethnic groups to seek control of the state (Mutua 2008). Due to the ethnic groups' urge to control the state, it is in the instrumentalists' view that African politics is typified by the manipulation of ethnic identities for economic and political ends (Berman 1998) and that ethnic politics is propagated by the fact that ethnicity can be exploited and manipulated at will by the political elites (Ake 2000). Moreover, instrumentalists also argue that ethnicity provides a sense of belonging, especially in individualistic urban centers which are prone to compete for scarce resources and insecurity. Thus, it grants the much needed social safety nets which mitigate against such ills like poverty in the face of harsh economic times (Nnoli1995).

The constructivists' approach to ethnicity is one that discredits the very existence of ethnic groups and to them, ethnicity and by extension ethnic groups are socially constructed (Ajulu 2002). They also regard those who

are inclined towards the existence of ethnic groups as people engrossed in what they term as 'ideological consciousness' depicting ethnicity as a reality that can be mobilized and manipulated for the political purposes (Brown, 2000). Therefore, their understanding of ethnicity is anchored on the notion that ethnicity is a product of a conscious and premeditated effort by both the members and non-members of an ethnic group to define that ethnic group (Le Vine 1997, p 50).

The situational school, whose perspective of ethnicity is closely related to that of the instrumentalists', considers ethnicity as a reality that can be used in different situations depending on the rewards at stake. As such, ethnicity becomes a malleable phenomenon whose boundaries can inflate and deflate in different situations (Bates, 1983).

Based on the four approaches, it is tempting to view Kenyan politics through the prism of the instrumentalist but doing so would render other attributes like those identified by the primordialists exclusively irrelevant. As such, this paper adopts Young's (1993) suggestion that approaches to ethnicity are intertwined in a mesh that brings together three interactive approaches that include instrumentalist, primordialists and constructivists.

Literature Review

This section undertakes to trace the beginning of ethnicized politics. It takes a historical perspective which traces the beginning of ethnic consciousness to the colonial period and to highlight how successive regimes failed to eliminate vice by using the same tactics of the colonialists for political and economic expedience. The section also highlights how ethnicity has manifested itself in Kenya's politics by examining the voting patterns of previous elections as well as its manifestation in the development of the country.

Tracing the Beginning of Ethnic Consciousness

One of the most persistent aspects of colonial legacy in post-colonial Africa and Kenya, in particular, was the ethnic division that manifested itself both as a group identity and as a mobilizing agent in the quest for economic and political gains. The intricate process of group and class configuration merged with the colonialists' attempt to handle traditional societies and their attempt

to develop sophisticated capitalist economies in various colonies (Kitching, 1980). Therefore, it would be difficult to gain an understanding of the ethnic intricacies in Kenya's political development unless we go back down memory lane to examine the impact of colonialism on ethnic groups' organization (Leys, 1975).

Ethnic consciousness, as well as the intense ethnic rivalry in Kenya's political arena, derives somewhat from the manner in which the colonialist established local governments and administrative borders on the basis of linguistics and cultural orientation. This was informed by an erroneous colonialist's understanding of Africans which was premised on the idea that Africans organized themselves along tribal lines (Sandbrook, 1985).

Like most African countries, Kenya which became a republic in 1963, was a product of European machinations. The conference in Berlin (1884) laid the ground for official demarcation of the continent of Africa into different territories that would be put under the influence of various European powers (Rosenberg, 2004: 16 -18). For the first time, several pre-existing African societies (ethnic nations) with independent and diverse social, political, and cultural spheres were put under the same territory — Kenya just as other African countries was born during this period (Mamdani, 2018:9; Mungeam, 1978). Critics of European countries' actions during and after the Berlin conference that led to the formation of multi-ethnic states in Africa have argued that lack of consultation or involvement of the locals during the process of determining who they would be merged with had far-reaching consequences (Ogot, 2000:13).

Interestingly, the consequences of merging different ethnic groups to form different countries did not have an immediate negative impact, at least for the continent since ironically; it is these same ethnic groups that collaborated to form liberation movements that ejected Europeans from Africa. During its establishment, Kenya had over 40 different ethnic groups which were previously independent of each other but had now been merged to form the British Crown Colony of Kenya that was first administered by Sir William Mackinnon, and later a series of administrators, commissioners, and governors appointed by the queen from England took charge (Cohen & Middleton, 1970).

Some of the ethnic groups under Sir William Mackinnon had already established mutual hostility between them but this did not manifest itself as a threat to the stability of the new nation-state. As such, conflicts are not solely based on cultural differences and cultural homogeneity is not a necessary condition for political stability. The animosity between ethnic groups that led to the 1992 ethnic clashes and 2008 post-election violence is a product of both ethnicization of politics and politicization of ethnicity, factors that can be traced back to the colonial era. These factors were later inherited by post-colonial political leaders who failed to inculcate a national culture due to their pursuit of sectarian and self-interests. The burden of ethnic rivalry and ethnicized politics was later passed to their contemporaries who also failed in the nation-building project.

As it was clear that the exit of the British from Kenya was inevitable, and that the country was destined for independence, cracks began to emerge among the political elites. Their division played out openly in England during the third Lancaster conferences as the representatives of Kenya African National Union (KANU) which was dominated by the majority ethnic communities, and those of Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) which was representing minority ethnic groups, differed on the post-independence political and economic structure of Kenya (Anderson, 2005: 548).

Upon independence, it seems that the country was not able to come up with an elaborate action-building project that would bind the people together. Instead in less than a decade after independence, social trust, which is a crucial element in nation-building, was lost and the hopes for a better country started to fade giving way to the uneasy relationship between political elites as well as between the ethnic groups, especially the major ethnic groups (Hazzlewood, 1979). The nature of politics that was being practiced during the early years of the new republic exacerbated the situation. The idea of winner takes all in Kenyan politics transformed elections to a fiercely contested affair (De Smedt, 2009) placing ethnicity at the center of the political struggle.

The National Identity Project in Post-Independence Kenya

With clear divisions among the majority and minority ethnic groups being witnessed during the independence process, and the multi-ethnic, race and religious identity that characterized the new nation of Kenya, the government

embarked on a project to promote nationalism. President Jomo Kenyatta and the second president Daniel Moi introduced a series of measures aimed at uniting the nation. Their strategy was to portray the discourse of development as a pillar for ethnic unification. Development and national unity were seen as self-reinforcing. This formed the basis for the establishment of a one-party state as President Jomo Kenyatta argued that a multi-party system was a threat to national unity as it would prop up ethnic-based political parties and ideology (Mutua 2008). He therefore resorted to dissolving opposition political parties and KANU remained the party for all Kenyans. Swahili and English also became official languages to avoid elevating any single local language. This was later followed by standardization of the education system (Gachanga, 2012).

Jomo Kenyatta's bid to unite the country was nipped in the bud when he, together with a faction of politicians obstructed the notion of separation of powers by weakening the legislature and the judiciary and crafting an imperial presidency. The elites who wielded economic and political power in Kenyatta's regime came from the larger Kikuyu community to which he was a member (Ogot & Ochieng' 1995). Political power was informally exercised to such an extent that there was no distinction between the ruling party and the ethnic grouping known as the Gikuyu, Embu, Meru Association. KANU and GEMA were, therefore, joined in the hip (Himbara 1994).

In 1978, after the demise of Jomo Kenyatta, President Daniel Moi ascended to power by virtue of being Kenyatta's Vice President. He soon introduced the Nyayo philosophy in a bid to unite the country (Moi, 1987). But this did not yield much in terms of nation-building as he continued to exercise the same machinations that Kenyatta had started save with some degree of ferocity. Hailing from the Kalenjin Community, Moi personalized power and engaged in a populist brand of politics to strengthen his base which he felt was threatened by the GEMA political elites. The Nyayo philosophy which was a concoction of Peace, Love and Unity became a threat to ethnic groups and individuals with dissenting opinions reducing Moi's era to one characterized with personalization of power, dictatorship, political assassinations and muzzling of the dissenter. This served to enhance ethnic consciousness leading to ethnicization of politics and politicization of ethnicity as ethnicity became a significant card for mobilization and political bargaining (Gachanga, 2012).

The period between 1964 and 1992 Kenya was under a single-party system in which KANU was the main political party. After the repeal of Section 2A in 1992, Kenya transitioned to a multi-party system although with the political infrastructure of a single-party system. Therefore, the multi-party system further calcified the ethnic consciousness as the manipulation and exploitation of ethnicity continued and this time it was reflected in the voting patterns as will be demonstrated in the subsequent section.

Ethnicity, Political Parties, & Coalition Politics

The stringent requirement of the 2010 new constitution that a presidential candidate had to garner 50% +1 of cast votes to win an election created another period of intense ethnic mobilizations. This is due to the realization that a presidential candidate could not win a national election by merely depending on their ethnic blocs. This is because even the largest ethnic groups in the country consist of roughly 10–18% of the total population. For example, according to the 1999 population census, the following communities could be considered as the largest with each having more than a 10 percent share of the population, Kikuyu (17.15%), Luhya (13.82%), Kalenjin (12.86%), Luo (10.47%), and Kamba (10.07%). This means that the major ethnic groups made up 64% of the total population while the over 35 remaining ethnic groups share made up 36% of the total (Republic of Kenya 2009). These figures mean that to win an election in Kenya, different ethnic groups must form pre-election coalitions to face off with their opponents (Elischer, 2008).

Valuable lessons were learned during the 1997 general elections when opposition political parties, Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (FORD-Kenya), Labour Democratic Party (LDP), Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the Democratic Party, failed to defeat the incumbent KANU. This loss was attributed to the fact that the opposition political parties had divided votes among themselves giving the incumbent a slim win. Both the ruling party and the opposition parties during the 1997 general elections were associated with different ethnic groups and not ideologies (Foeken, & Dietz, 2000:126-30). To put it in context, FORD-Kenya was related to the Luyha community, SDP was associated with the Kamba community, NDP (later LDP) was associated with the Luo, KANU was linked to the Kalenjin community, and DP was

associated with the Kikuyus. The two tables below will explain the correlation between ethnicity, party affiliation and voting patterns;

Province	Ethnic Composition	Comment
Nairobi	47% Kikuyu 16% Luhya 15% Luo 15% Kamba	Nairobi is the most ethnically diverse region in Kenya
Coast	Smaller coastal communities	The coast is equally diverse
Eastern	55% Kamba 39% Meru/Embu	87% of all Kamba live in Eastern 97% of all Meru/Embu live in Eastern
North-Eastern	96% Somalis	95% of all Somali live in North-Eastern
Rift Valley	51% Kalenjin 15% Kikuyu 7% Masai	95% of all Kalenjin live in Rift Valley 97% of all Masai live in Rift Valley
Western	88% Luhya	80% of all Luhya live in Western
Nyanza	63% Luo 31% Kisii	87% of all Luo live in Nyanza 95% of all Kissi live in Nyanza

Source: National Census report, Kenya Bureau of Statistis (2009)

Diamond and Gunther developed a framework to analyze political parties in Africa. They came up with three categories of political party membership namely mono-ethnic, the multi-ethnic alliance and the multi-ethnic integrative parties (Diamond and Gunther, 2001:1-39). They examine factors such as the leadership of the party, functions of the party in terms of whose interest they support, electoral cleavages and national coverage. A keen look at the political parties in Kenya allows one to conclude that most of them are mere ethnic formations - going by Diamond and Gunther's categorization. The polarisation of ethnic identity and political party affiliation means that even those smaller ethnic political parties that do not have a presidential candidate and therefore must vote for another party in a presidential contest, have higher chances of winning a majority of the parliamentary and civic seats through their political party in their ethnic backyard.

Table 1
Regional voting pattern in the 1997 general election

Province	FORD-K 1997	FORD-A 1997	DP 1997	NDP 1997	SDP 1997	KANU 1997
Nairobi	6%	1%	32%	20%	12%	22%
Coast	4%	0%	16%	12%	7	53
North Eastern	4%	7%	5%	0%	1	60
Eastern	4%	3%	24%	2%	23	40
Central	0%	2%	48%	3%	11	11
Rift Valley	9%	0%	25%	3%	1	59

Western	44%	3%	1%	3%	1	47
Nyanza	10%	0%	4%	48%	3	30
Total	10%	1%	22%	11%	4	39
Seats	44	1	39	21	15	110
PNS	.56	.45	.60	.42	.68	.76

Source: 1997 election data is compiled from the Electoral Commission of Kenya, 1997

Parliamentary Results by Constituency

Having suffered defeat in 1997, the opposition parties decided to form a single coalition to face off the ruling party KANU's candidate in the 2002 general election. While there was general fatigue in the incumbent party which had been in power for over three decades and whose leadership had been marred by corruption, nepotism, and abuse of human rights allegations, the new coalition - branded as the National Rainbow Alliance (NARC) - was a club of ethnic groups which had seen strength in their collective numbers but was not tied by a single ideology. This was proven two years later when two key figures in the coalition President Mwai Kibaki (Democratic Party) and Raila Odinga (Liberal Democratic Party -LDP) failed to agree on the constitutional reform agenda (Lynch, 2006). It was their sharp ideological differences on the structure of the government in the new constitution that brought about their falling out.

President Mwai Kibaki wanted to strengthen the central government while Raila Odinga was advocating for a parliamentary system of devolved government (Mbugua, 2008). Their positions were supported by the historical ethnic philosophy whereby Kibaki was representing the Kikuyus and other significant tribes' interests and wanted a centralized system of government while Raila Odinga who was getting support from relatively smaller ethnic groups wanted to have a decentralized (devolution) system of government. This rivalry resembled that witnessed between KANU and KADU in the early 1960s (Maxon, 2016:26).

After the constitutional referendum of 2004 that rejected the centralized system of government proposed by President Mwai Kibaki's regime, the NARC coalition collapsed. Some scholars may also emphasize that the dissolution of the NARC coalition was not only affected by the difference in the system of government but more importantly the refusal by the DP side of the coalition to honor a pre-election Memorandum of Understanding among the major

coalition parties (Chege, 2008: 126). This would have seen the position of Prime Minister introduced in the constitution, and Raila Odinga appointed the new prime minister When the agreement was not fulfilled in the proposed constitution, supporters of Odinga, a majority from his ethnic community, felt betrayed and supported him in ditching the government in 2004

In the 2007 General elections, ethnic arithmetic by the political elites remained the most realistic means of winning the elections. From the 2002 elections, new political party coalitions outfits had emerged. This reaffirms the instrumentalist and situationists idea that ethnic alignment is not permanent but somewhat depends on where ethnic groups' interests will be best protected (Cheeseman, 2008:166-70).

Perceived political enemies became friends and in 2007 two political outfits emerged, the Party of National Unity (PNU) and the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM). Even at this time, ethnicity remained the most important basis of political parties' membership. On the one hand, the Orange Democratic Party (ODM) and on the other, the Party of National Unity (PNU) were merely a realignment of ethnic groups and not ideological beliefs (Gibson, & Long, 2009). In the run-up to the 2007 General Election, a survey was conducted in 1,185 respondents by Afro barometer on how close one felt connected to a specific political party. The following results were yielded.

Table 2
Showing results on of a Survey on political party support, the results indicate the percentages based on ethnic identity

Elections in Kenya -2007			
ODM (& Allies)		PNU (& Allies)	
Ethnic Group	Percentage (%)	Ethnic Group	Percentage (%)
Luo	28	Kikuyu	41.2
Luhya	24	Embu/Meu	2.2
Kamba	7.0	Luhya	9.8
Somalia	6.8	Somali	7.2
Kalenjin	5.1	Kamba	6.7
Kisii	5.0	Kalenjin	4.6
Other ethnicities	23.7	Other Ethnicities	18.3
724 Respondents		461 Respondents	

Source: Afro barometer *found 5* (2016)

The support for ODM was high among the Luo and the Luhya because of Raila Odinga the presidential candidate and Musalia Mudavadi - the potential Vice President - was a Luhya. PNU had the support of Kikuyus and the Meru

because Kibaki the presidential candidate is Kikuyu and the Meru, Embu, Gikuyu (Kikuyus) are part of a larger ethnic outfit known as the GEMA. Moody Awuory, a Luhya political elite in the PNU side, was slotted for the vice presidency and therefore this explains why PNU got the support from the Luhya.

In 2013, the coalition between Uhuru Kenyatta (from the Kikuyu community and leader of TNA) and his running mate William Ruto (from the Kalenjin community and leader of URP) teamed up to form the Jubilee Alliance which was strengthened by the narrative that their on-going trials at the international criminal court at the Hauge was a victimization of their respective ethnic groups. Therefore, they had a moral duty to vote for the duo to 'save' them from the trials (Cheeseman, Lynch, & Willis, 2014:2-4: Mueller, 2014).). The Kalenjin and Kikuyu regions voted significantly for the presidency of Uhuru Kenyatta while they voted 90% of all aspirants on the TNA and URP parties in parliamentary and civic positions in their region (Ferree, Gibson, & Long, 2014: Carrier, & Kochore, 2014). The campaign narrative at the time was that their opponents were responsible for 'fixing' them at the international court; therefore as a sign of protest, their rivals were not to get any votes from their region. The fall out between William Ruto and Raila Odinga in 2011-12 saw the dwindling of Odinga's support from Ruto's Rift Valley Province. In 2007 Raila Odinga received over 1,000,000 votes in the region against the incumbent President who received roughly 400,000. In 2013, Raila Odinga who teamed up with Kalonzo Musyoka to form the Coalition of Reforms and Democracy (CORD), saw less than 100,000 votes from the same region. In summary, we can argue that the manifestation of ethnic identity in political party and coalitions in Kenya is consistent with the instrumentalists' concept of convenience (Horowitz, 2000).

Ethnicity and Development

Kenya provides a good case study of how ethnicity and politics have impacted on the development and more importantly the unequal distribution of resources (Yieke,2010; Ajulu, R. (2002). The Kenyatta and Moi presided over discriminatory regimes in which dissenting leaders and their ethnic groups were subjected to economic deprivation that saw major infrastructural projects carried out in regime-friendly regions. But this did not result in significant economic developments in regime-friendly regions including

those that produced the presidents since the infrastructure developments were of a substandard quality and were marred by scandals, yet more infrastructural developments were promised during presidential campaigns.

Bayart (1993) develops the argument that when states are seized by an ethnic group, upward mobility is preserved for members of such ethnic groups who end up using state machinery and protection in pursuit of self-interest instead of national development (Bayrat, 1993). In the case of Kenya, an overzealous pursuit of self-interest has led to the loss of trillions of Shillings in major corruption scandals like Anglo Leasing, Goldenberg, Grand Regency, Triton, and the maize scandal, to mention but a few. Interestingly, ethnicity has prevented the individuals involved from facing criminal prosecutions and many of them are still walking free, bathing in ill-gotten wealth. Such individuals have often used the ethnic card in their defense claiming that their ethnic groups are being targeted ironically in scandals where the members of the groups had little or no benefits.

The recent establishment of devolved governments, as a constitutional requirement, has become synonymous with devolved corruption as political leaders together with their cronies in the county governments misappropriate public funds for personal gains. County governors have engaged in the overpricing of equipment like wheelbarrows and pens as well as infrastructure projects. In ethnic homogenous counties, nepotism is rife while in heterogeneous counties, ethnicity has taken over. In essence, the national government together with county governments have merged to form a rapacious state where nepotism and ethnic identities are used as benchmarks in the awarding of tenders and state contracts.

However, with the establishment of the Office of the Auditor General under the new constitutional dispensation, a number of scandals and misappropriation have been revealed to the public. There have also been pockets of good practices in which county governments have endeavored to provide essential services to the locals. A good case in point is Makueni County which was given a clean bill of health in 2018 with regards the proper utilization of county funds. Other counties, especially in the former North Eastern province, that were initially marginalized, have also endeavored to provide the much needed essential infrastructure and services. In short, there have been significant improvements in various sectors like health, education, and industry in regions that had been previously neglected.

Even though the situation is slowly changing as a result of a historical handshake, the public and private sectors are still dominated by members of ethnic groups allied to the president and his deputy. The impact of such dominance of politics and economy by a small number of ethnic groups has resulted in the ethnicization of public institutions and enterprises as evident in the National Cohesion and Integration (NCIC) report of 2011. The report painted a grim picture of ethnicization of public service, four out of 42 ethnic groups in Kenya sat in 58% of the positions in the public sector (NCIC Report, 2011). Corruption, little or no accountability, blithe disregard of merits and impunity become tolerated because of ethnic cronyism in the public sector.

Conclusion

This paper has endeavored to answer the question as to why ethnicity has influenced Kenya's politics as well as how it has impacted on the democracy and development of the country since independence. The theoretical aspect has provided a prism through which we can understand ethnic politics has calcified in an environment typified with manipulation and exploitation of the ethnic card in for self-serving interests.

Although the beginning of ethnic consciousness is traced back to the colonial period, the salience of ethnic identity becomes much more apparent in the post-colonial era. This is in part due to the perceived benefits that come along with political power as well as the misconception that the ascendance of an ethnic kingpin to the highest political position is equivalent to the ascendance of his entire community to such a position. Therefore, this explains the intense political and ethnic rivalry witnessed in different electioneering years as well as the intense ethnic tensions and voting patterns.

To emphasize the role played by ethnic identity in party affiliation, whenever a leader from a particular ethnic group is frustrated within the political party, his/her exit means the party also loses the support of the ethnic group. Some examples of these include the departure of Jaramogi Oginga Odinga from KANU to form the Kenya People's Union (Geertzel 1970:7-11), the departure of Raila Odinga from Ford-Kenya to form the National Development Party in 1997 where he was followed by all members of parliament from his Luo ethnic group (Daily Nation, November 13, 1997). The move of John Keen to KANU saw the Maasai community follow suit, William Ruto's exit from

the ODM to form the United Republican Party saw 90% of the Kalenjins who voted for the Orange Democratic Party in 2007 shift their allegiance to the Jubilee Alliance in 2013 - whose members they had voted against in 2007. This affects Kenya's development and democratic transition in two ways. First, it reduces political parties to mere ethnic convergence and not an association based on ideologies on how the country can overcome the serious development challenges that it faces. Secondly, it means that a fall out among the political elites is transferred to the entire ethnic group through systematic and targeted marginalization.

Kenya transitioned to a multi-party system in 1992 - a significant step with regards to democracy. Yet ethicised politics, as well as politicized ethnicity, was a thorn in the flesh of Kenya's transition. Ethnic mobilizations, manipulation, and exploitation continued to typify the political arena. Although the simmering tensions did not result in bloody skirmishes in previous years, in 2007, Kenya's democracy was tested by the post-election skirmishes that erupted after the hotly contested general elections.

Importantly we seek to advance the notion that the existence of several ethnic groups should not be a stumbling block to national cohesion and progressive development and as a matter of fact, it could serve to the advantage of the nation if these groups held the government accountable and demanded enhanced quality and efficiency with regards to service delivery. Multi-ethnicity only becomes a bane when there is willful marginalization of certain ethnic groups due to the politicization of ethnicity by self-aggrandizing political elites who stir up ethnic emotions in a bid to capture political power. This notion will closely align us to the instrumentalists' school of thought, but importantly we cannot overlook the primordialists and the social constructivists.

This paper maintains that Kenya's democracy can be consolidated by strengthening and enhancing the autonomy of existing institutions like the judiciary, the Office of the Auditor General, National Assemblies as well as the Police. It is our belief that the historical handshake provides a unique opportunity to de-ethnicize our politics, fight corruption and to enhance meritocracy in the public and private sectors.

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