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## Kenyatta and Odinga: The Harbingers of Ethnic Nationalism in Kenya

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# Kenyatta and Odinga: The Harbingers of Ethnic Nationalism in Kenya

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In discussing ethnicity Ali Mazrui observes that "while the greatest friend of African nationalism is race consciousness, the greatest enemy of African nationhood is ethnic consciousness" (1977, 295). He asserts that the process of national integration requires a partial decline in the power of kinship symbolism and ethnic confrontation (Mazrui, 299). In a nutshell the problem of negative ethnicity has led to governments in Africa being overthrown, poverty and genocide in Rwanda in 1994. The disputed 2007-2008 election, more than just a protest against a stolen election, was the politicization of ethnic rivalries that have dominated many African nations. Indeed, political mobilization, along ethnic lines, has been a major source of inter-cine political conflicts in Kenya especially in 1969, 1992, 1997 and 2008. Could the foundations of ethnic tensions between the Luo and the Kikuyu have been laid by Jaramogi Odinga and Kenyatta? As the two frontier politicians in Kenya, their fallout in 1966 probably set the ground for ethnic animosity in the country. It was the spirit of Nationalism that motivated Kenya's premier nationalists, Kenyatta and Odinga, among others, to triumph over colonialism. This opinion is supported by

dynamics which led to the formation of the Mau Mau movement, the Kenya African National Union (KANU), the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU), the Kenya Peoples' Union (KPU), the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (FORD) and the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) parties, which all claimed that their goal was to fight ignorance, poverty and disease but eventually turned out to be a conglomeration of ethnic dominated vehicles for getting political power. Decolonization and even the second liberation were also driven by nationalist fervour. In Kenya, nationalism was precipitated by the events after 1945, Nkrumah's pan-Africanism, Christian-educated teachers and the fiery nationalist politics of Odinga, Mboya and Argwings Kodhek, all of whom were agreed on the desire for independence. No doubt, the pan-African movement showed the path and it was this trajectory which was followed by Kaunda of Zambia, Nyerere in Tanganyika, Obote in Uganda.

But compared to Tanzania, did nationalism succeed in uniting all Kenyans as one nation, Africanizing the economy, bringing equitable development and gender parity, protecting our resources and environment as well as eradicating poverty, ignorance and disease and ethnicity? Did every Kenyan feel part and parcel of the Kenyan crucible similar to the melting crucible in the United States of America. If not, then what happened to the Kenyan body-politic after 1963, 1969, 1975, 1982, 1990, 1992 and 2008? The paper seeks to find out why Kenyan pioneer nationalism was replaced by the Kiambu, Kalenjin and Mt. Kenya mafias. Why is it that in Kenya, the heads of security forces, Central Bank, NSIS and police force have to come from the backyard of the incumbent president while all the heads of our public universities belong to the ethnic groups where the campuses are situated? Do Kenyans trust each other with power? Then why was the MOU between Kibaki and Raila dishonoured in 2003? Why have the Luo been perceived as natural oppositionists since 1969? Why do the Somali, Turkana, Pokot and the Giriama feel marginalized by their own government? This paper interrogates all these issues by examining the role of pioneer nationalists in our struggle for independence and the changes that came after 1963, the crystallization of opposition parties, the place of neo-colonialism in all these and finally, the ethnic race for the control of economic and political hegemony in Kenya, which

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culminated in the worst election violence ever in December 2007 and the formation of the Grand Coalition government in 2008. The paper suggests that negative ethnicity was responsible for the political break up between Odinga and Kenyatta and the subsequent marginalization of Odinga and his supporters in the country's political arena.

## II. ETHNICITY: THE ORIGINS

What is ethnicity? Does Kenya have ethnic nationalism or is there something like a nationalist ideology which guides our politicians? The answers to these questions are polemical, not definite. Nationalism is the love for one's country, the readiness to serve it, die for it. But Thomas Eriksen alludes to the fact that "ethnicity is an aspect of social relationship between agents who consider themselves as culturally distinctive from members of other groups with whom they have regular interactions" (119). In addition to sharing all the prevailing culture and language, ethnic groups tend to have myths of common origin and have ideologies that encourage endogamy (Eriksen 119-120). Thus ethnicity is an attempt by a group of people in a nation to think and act differently from their fellow nationals in a given territory. They are distinguishable by language, culture, and beliefs about each other. In their struggle for a stake in sharing the national resources, they identify ethnicity as a handy for bargaining of resource access. Yet there is also a nationalist ideology, an ethnic ideology which demands a stake on behalf of an ethnic group. If this nationalist consciousness becomes ethnic, then ethnic nationalism becomes part of the ideology of a given ethnic group guided by the search for social, economic, and political security from the state.

Wanyande, Omosa and Chweya have argued that the class-based conflicts that emerged during the colonial period continued into the post-colonial era, precisely because the class structure of society was retained although the bourgeoisie was reconstituted (Wanyande, Omosa and Chweya, 2007, 13). State officials were employed in the public office to accumulate capital along with their political clients in the private sector. The patron-client relationship and linkage gave an impetus to ethnic relationship between the big man and the small man in the grassroots (ibid). Ethnic communities that were affiliated to the centre of the political system were able to accumulate by far more than ethnic groups that stayed outside the inner circles of the political structure (ibid, 13). It was the desire for such state privileges associated with being at the top of the political regime that set the stage for ethnic competition for power between Odinga and Kenyatta. Each one of them, supported by their ethnic communities wanted to monopolize state power for their benefits hence Odinga lost when he disagreed with Kenyatta. Looked at in another way, the ethnic animosity

and subsequent political disagreements between Odinga and Kenyatta is an example of elite conflict. According to Mwaura (1997, 2) this type of conflict may threaten the established political order but rarely becomes broadly violent, although violence does exemplify itself through assassinations of leading political figures. The conflict is relatively restrained and characterised by competition among elites for political power and therefore the conflict is self-containing and within the status quo. Assassinations and murder become alternative instruments of elite competition against those who threaten the ruling faction, such as Pio Pinto and Tom Mboya, then Ronald Ngala and J.M. Kariuk and Robert Ouko and Alexander Muge in the three decades of elite competition in Kenya. In giving example on ethnic nationalism in Kenya, Mazrui noted that 'a Kikuyu in Nairobi is probably a Kikuyu first and a laborer second and a Kikuyu businessman sees his future in the survival of the Kikuyu pre-eminence in Kenya much more than he sees his future in terms of a shared destiny with a Luo businessman' (Mazrui, 299). Such are the intricacies and uncertainties of negative ethnicity that ethnic groups in Kenya fail to see the country as belonging to all citizens. It a truism that some Kenyans are more at home in the company of their kinsmen and "tribesmen" than, when they are with members of other communities.

Hence it is the opinion of Adedeji that most intra-state conflicts in Africa are caused by "ethnicism and 'tribalism'" (Adedeji, 8). Ethnic identity (or nationalism) "is more a question of perception than an absolute phenomenon and the identity can be perceived by the group or family themselves." But also, Adedeji asserts, ethnic identity "can be attributed by outsiders" (Adedeji, 1999: 8). Thus ethnicity is not merely about language, same culture (as in Rwanda) and religion (as in Somalia) but it is mostly a perception. For example, due to extensive migrations of Rwandese a refugee from Rwanda, there is now a new ethnic group in Uganda known as Banyarwanda (Adedeji 8). On the other hand, Rawlinson (2003) has argued that though ethnicity is primordial, it was created by colonialist in their scheme of divide and rule. According Guy Arnold, political elites such as Odinga and Kenyatta used "tribalism" to gain influence and resource distribution (Arnold, 25-28). Ethnicity might also be caused by "the fear of the future, lived through the past. Such fear, Adedeji explains, is based on "a history of social uncertainty due to the failure of the state to arbitrate justly between groups or to provide credible guarantee of protection for ethnic groups" (Adedeji 8). The search for status, power and access to resources should be seen in terms of ethnicity. In order to dampen class consciousness, issues of ethnicity have been used for the control of the state power (Rawlinson, 2003 28). Thus in Africa, the main criteria by which socio-political groups define and identify themselves is rooted ethnicity instead of class.

Peace and stability is only maintained if there are perceptions of ethnic balancing in sharing the national resources and power. Bates (1983) argues, and rightly so, that the long process of industrialization, western education, urbanization, political mobilization, and competition for jobs and other commercial opportunities, which come with development and modernization, would deepen ethnic identities and animosity as individuals and politicians exploited their ethnic group memberships as tools for political, economic and social advancement (Bates 8). In other words, the Kikuyu and the Luo who were the first beneficiaries of modernization began competing for economic and political opportunities long before any other Kenyans could hence the fierce competition that still holds to date. But all in all, it needs to be reiterated that it is political leaders who use ethnicity for political mobilization and that citizens themselves do not have ethnicity in the blood. It is this "instrumental manipulation" by politicians that leads to ethnic cleansing as happened in Kenya in the 1992 and 2007/8. Indeed, African leaders such as Kenyatta and Milton Obote of Uganda "had pursued nationalism at the expense of freedom of expression through authoritarianism and the one-party state" (Rawlinson, 2003). As a corollary, most Kenyans suffered repression, detention and lack of democratic space during Kenyatta's reign, in the name of building a united Kenya.

### III. CONTRASTING PERSONALITIES AND ELITES

Class, power and ethnicity became increasingly intertwined and thus displaced race as a factor in the political process hence the Kenyan society became de-racialised but not de-ethnicised (Karuti Kanyinga, 2007, 86). Kanyinga asserts that at independence, "the concept of tribe became more important as the new elites turned to their ethnic groups for support in their competition with each other" (Kanyingi, 86). Subsequently and for the sake of power, ethnicity became a toll for political survival. As a result, the police, army and the civil service came under the control of ethnic loyalties. The bureaucracy became an instrument through which the state dominated the political relations and society. In Kenya, the provincial administration, inherited from the colonial era, became the means through which the government maintained law and order at the local level and hence control political opponents. It is stated that after banning political parties Kenyatta had unlimited political space which he used "with his Kikuyu confidants to amass political power for the control and regulation of the Society' (Kanyinga, 87). Concomitant with this, Atieno Odhiambo observes that the study of independence movements and conflicts in Africa has perhaps, legitimately, been weighted, in terms of concentration on elites (1972, 22). In tandem with opinion, this paper has narrowed its focus on Odinga and Kenyatta, the two leading politicians and

nationalists. This focus is relevant because at independence, it was these two educated elites that assumed the reins of power under the belief that their struggle against colonialism was to act on behalf of the people who were voiceless. Indeed Odinga believed that Kenyatta was the right person for the leadership of Kenya as far as tackling ignorance, illiteracy and poverty was concerned.

For an orderly analysis of the two political allies who later became arch rivals it is vital to assess the ideologies, personalities and understanding that underpinned the political logic of each one of them and then set out to draw parallels and generalizations. Jaramogi Ajuma Oginga Odinga was born in 1911 (he revised it to 1917), studied at Maseno and Makerere College, where he trained as a teacher. He began his political journey as a member of the Central Nyanza Local Native Council (LNC) in late 1940s, where he was an outstanding critic of the colonial based LNC for failing to be the voice of the oppressed masses, instead serving the colonial interests (Berman 311). He used his position to oppose forced land alienation and conservation measures that were draconian. Berman asserts that "in many instances these were unpopular measures that the colonial administrators pushed through the councils" (Berman 311). He came out as the voice of the African peasants. In the 1950s he offered strength to the nationalist recovery after the destruction of the Mau Mau resistance movement and the subsequent arrest of its leaders led by Kenyatta between 1952 and 1960 (Atieno-Odhiambo, 1998). He could have been easily mellowed to the whims of the colonialists and international capital to take over Kenya's leadership, when Kenyatta was in prison, but he chose the path of a wider nationalist Kenyan cause, which to me was the epic of mega nationalism in Kenya. Odinga was also a champion of African business initiatives, which he saw as a way of liberating Africans from the yoke of poverty and dependency. Writing on Odinga, Atieno Odhiambo (1998) is of the view that Odinga differed with Kenyatta in political perception. Odinga went for populist politics that was in tandem with peasants and underdogs such as the Mau Mau fighters who should be compensated, the landless who should get free land and the small man in the urban centers. The differences between Odinga and Kenyatta stemmed from their different perceptions on how Kenya's economic and political challenges, such as the prevailing inequities and the gulf between the rich and the poor, could be bridged.

Jomo Kenyatta (Johnstone Kamau) was born around 1890 in Gatundu and was educated by missionaries. In 1928, he began his political life as Secretary-General of Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) and an editor of its monthly journal, *Muigwithania*, the first vernacular publication produced by Africans in the colony (Berman, 1992: 230). The KCA objectives

included the settlement of land claims, the security of title to the remaining Kikuyu land, the expansion of educational facilities, the improved health and sanitation facilities, and the promotion of economic development in the reserves (Berman, 230). He was a cultural champion who opposed Scotland missionaries' attempts to ban female genital mutilation. Through KCA, he challenged the colonial state's role as a paternalistic protector and an intermediary to African rights. He, in essence, succeeded in organizing the Kikuyu against the Social, economic and political domination. Kenyatta enhanced political consciousness among his people. He helped to create an opposition against the British colonial masters, asking for direct representation in the Legco.

Kenyatta traveled to London to create awareness of the injustice and the land problems created by the British alienation policy. He supported teacher education in his Kiambu district. He imbued Pan Africanism and worked closely with Kaunda of Zambia, Nkurumah of Ghana, Nyerere of Tanganyika, and Obote of Uganda to promote the spirit of independence in Africa. He assumed the powerful and influential position of a "quintessential African" (Ogot and Ochieng, 1995). He was the savior, the messiah against colonialism, a liberator who "held the lion by the tail" and believed that the tree of freedom must be watered with blood. His return from London had far-reaching consequences and as a leader of Kenya African Union, he was as inspiration to the youth and Kenyan politicians. Arnold highlights an important personality of Kenyatta when he writes:

Politics [in Kenya] are volatile, sometimes fierce and the interest groups diverse. ...The country's ruling elite is conservative; in the late Jomo Kenyatta they had a leader who mixed in his person [sic] the traditional beliefs of an older, vanishing age with a keen desire to see Kenya modernize and an admiration for western, especially British, achievements. (Arnold, 1980, 1)

No description fits Kenyatta's political personality better than the above one. This assertion by Arnold is not only befitting but, an explicit exposition Kenyatta's understanding and belief in the global economic and political situation, reflecting the core of his ideology and beliefs that guided his administration of Kenya as a father figure, an educator and an African patriarch.

Mwaura (1997) has analysed factors that made Kenyatta a strong leader at independent. Firstly, "to obtain stature in last years of colonialism, nationalist leaders owed a great deal of their success to verbal virtuosity" (Mwaura, 5). Until independence gave them concrete power, they did not have adequate resources for general patronage to win support. The skills of oratorical persuasion were often paramount in the initial

phases of rising to power, though they had to be combined with political prudence and tactical competence" (Mwaura, 5). The "gift of the gab" was therefore initially important and Kenyatta, Odinga and Tom Mboya attained their political stature partly because of their capacity to captivate mass audiences.

Kenyatta's first act of patriotism was the declaration of a republic in 1964 after KANU's election victory in the 1963 elections. Next step was the wooing of KADU members to "cross the floor" from the opposition in parliament and join KANU and the government in forgoing national unity for national building. His vision to bring Kenyans together and wield one nation was eloquently portrayed by his colourful rhetoric to reduce inter-party divisionism which saw the Akamba Peoples Party (APP) of Paul Ngei and KADU join KANU. However, this manipulation did little to reduce ethnic animosity between the Luo and the Kikuyu.

With the declaration of a republic in 1964, Kenyatta got the opportunity to reduce the power promised to the regions (*jimbos*) - powers which he firmly believed would militate against the creation of a national identity (Mwaura, 1997: 5). Finally, Kenyatta centralized political power in the person and office of the President, a situation reinforced by the fact that President of the country was also the head of the ruling party. The institutions of political succession came under the control and direction of President Kenyatta. The following consequences came from the president's manipulation of the constitution: Firstly, the president was empowered with wide discretionary powers to appoint and fire all cabinet ministers - including the vice-president and all civil servants. Parastatal heads were his nominee or those of his ministers. Secondly, appointments of senior administrative officers (particularly Provincial Administration), helped cultivated a patronage system in which all parts of the country enjoyed some of the benison of patronage.

- After manipulating the constitution, Kenya became a *de facto* one party state where candidates could only 'stand' for civic and parliamentary elections if nominated by a political party - KANU. This ensured that potential rivals like Odinga and political recruitment and mobilization of people occurred within a rapidly shrinking political space.

According to Atieno Odhiambo (1998, 17), Kenyatta decided to support the petite bourgeoisie (*uthuur*). Property had to be protected using political power, and power had to be consolidated. So to Kenyatta, it was best protected within the Kikuyu nation and in the process eliminating the Luo and other ethnic rivals.

So, Atieno Odhiambo concludes, "the social struggle for the future was turned around and re-baptized Kikuyu-Luo rivalry as ethnicity won over ideology" (Atieno-Odhiambo, 5). In my view Kenyatta

wanted to monopolize political power in order to use it for economic gain by the children of Gikuyu and Mumbi. In contrast to Odinga, Kenyatta went for the already successful elites, not Odinga's poor and landless *ahoi*. He mobilized the Kikuyu elite around him and gave them a link with the international capital. From 1967, he forged the new Kikuyu-Kalenjin alliance with Daniel arap Moi in order to solve the perennial problem of land shortages in Kiambu, Muranga and Nyeri, by bringing several lorries of peasants from Central province. The possibility of wealth and opportunity lay in the Rift Valley province. To solve the Kikuyu agrarian problem, Atieno-Odhiambo argues, "he made a pragmatic alliance with Moi, a member of the conservative wing of the Kalenjin, to enable the Kikuyu to settle in the former White Highlands (Throup and Homsby, 1998). Kenyatta had a unique form of ethnicity and exclusion, choosing to be specifically loyal to his ethnic group and general to the Kenyan nation. Atieno-Odhiambo has argued that he distinguished between the "homeboy" and the other "outsiders": the Luo were regularly referred to as *waruguru*, *kinyamu*, *kihii* (or little boys) (Atieno-Odhiambo, 1998: 31). One blocked opportunity followed another, as industries collapsed or failed to be created in Western Kenya. It is my position that such innuendos and superficial marginalization created an incurable political animosity between the Luo and the Kikuyu elites on the one hand, and Luo and Kikuyu labours/peasants on the other, leading to the huge ethnic divide that culminated in the 1969 and 2007/8 violence in Kenya.

Yet the colonial administration always harassed African efforts to enter business because it was competing against the established trading preserves of Asians and Europeans. African initiative was also a demonstration of African initiatives (Odinga, 1967: 89). As a member of the Legco, Odinga used his opportunity in Parliament as a forum for attacking the colonial government and settlers, mobilizing fellow Members to frustrate colonial coercive measures. He led them to demand for more seats in the Legco, and they refused to accept the ministerial portfolios that were offered to entice them to follow the colonial path. That was Jaramogi championing nationalist interest, a phenomenon that later characterized his political style. Odinga's opposition to the colonial administration and later the Kenyatta government was driven by the suffering of the Kenyan masses rather than personal issues. In 1958 he mobilized the six additional Members to reject the Lennox Boyd constitution. In addition, he fought for Kenyatta's release from Kapenguria. As Berman points out, "Odinga also invoked Kenyatta's name and image as a national leader amid the shock and outrage of the colonial officials and settlers in the Council" (Berman, 1992: 399). Due to his efforts, at the end of 1958, the African Members of the council embarrassed the Administration when they collectively walked out during the governor's speech to the Legco.

Both Odinga and Kenyatta had a first. Mzee Jomo Kenyatta (1890-1978) was the first Prime-Minister and President of Kenya, and Jaramogi Ajumaa Oginga Odinga (1911-1993) was the first Vice-President (1963-1966), and both men were pioneer nationalists, educationists, cultural defenders of their ethnic groups, staunch ideologies and firm patriots and pan Africanists. However, according to Atieno-Odhiambo (1998), "the parting of ways between Odinga and Kenyatta was ideological, but was also reflected in their separate understandings and dreams". Their positioning, he asserts, represented conflicting understandings of the African past, because both of them had been immersed in the inventions of the past. He posits that both men brought with them an ethno-cultural understanding of politics, and both were deeply cultural, with values that were locally rooted among their kinsmen. Atieno-Odhiambo points out that, "both of them understood the link between individual and community, emphasized the potency of hard work and unity, and the force of power behind the developmental roots ethnicity" (Ibid, 28).

But Kenyatta was the archetype of repressive politics and used his position to forcefully weld Kenyans together. In contrast, Odinga was the doyen of opposition politics, a radical believer in peasant mobilization for political ends. Both men have legacies that spanned over fifty years. But what can we remember both these pioneer politicians for? How did they impact on the life of the nation? Can what they stood for still be felt across the country? Were they responsible for the prevailing ethnic polarization of the country? No doubt, they laid the foundation for the development of Kenyan politics as we know it today. Kenyatta's trajectory of creating a capitalist economy was established on the establishment of the monolithic Kenya African National Union (KANU) dictatorship, leading to one party politics and reprisals against any form of opposition (*nitawakanyaga kanyaga*-I will crush them). In pursuing this conservative policy, between 1963-1975, the country suffered one tragedy after another, including oppressive policies, assassinations, land grabbing, inequity, gender imbalance, negative ethnicity, and regionalism, and his successor, Daniel arap Moi, followed in his footsteps (*fuata nyayo*). Pio Gama Pinto (assassinated in 1965), T J Mboya (assassinated in 1969), Argwings-Kodhek (assassinated in 1972), Ronald Ngala (assassinated in 1973) and J M Kariuki (assassinated in 1975) all of whom paid the price for Kenya's bad governance and an assumed sense of political peace and stability. Kenyatta allied himself with conservative and neo-colonial forces under the guise of attracting foreign investments and fighting communism. On the other hand, Odinga set the motion for radical opposition politics with his base among his Luo community forming the first opposition party, the Kenya Peoples' Union (KPU) in 1969. On top of that he died while heading the

official opposition party, the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy-Kenya (FORD-K). By contradicting Kenyatta, and for being in radical opposition for close to 50 years, Odinga was the doyen of Kenyan opposition politics, and he thus set the ground for the subsequent economic marginalization of Nyanza region, for the economic downturn of the Luo professionals and civil servants and for their negative perception as the political black sheep in Kenya. According to Atieno Odhiambo, as a result of Odinga-Kenyatta rivalry, the Luo have since been seen as die-hard political anti-establishment, leading to Jaramodi Odinga's detention, the detention of his son, Raila in 1982 (as well as of Wasonga Sijeyo, the former MP for Gem) as the longest serving political detainee in Kenya (Atieno-Odhiambo, 1998, 23). Through Odinga's brand of politics, the socialist ideology became adopted in Kenya's political and intellectual life leading to the radicalization of student politics in our universities in 1970s and setting the links with Eastern-leaning democracies, such as Russia and China.

Both Odinga and Kenyatta, began their public life as political allies and nationalists friends and nationalists but later became bitter political rivals. Through their manipulations of the constitution, their marginalization of parts of Kenya, and their actions and omissions, they planted the seeds of nationalism, and later when they broke off, they encouraged the culture of intolerance and ethnic animosity in Kenya by pursuing different political ideologies behind their ethnic support.

Their long political rivalry set the ground for the bad blood between the Luo and the Kikuyu politicians and intellectuals. While these differences were purely ideological, they later assumed ethnic seriousness. Odinga was an enigmatic leftist (*ogwal bade cheko*) while Kenyatta was seen as a nationalist but one who favoured his community's economic advancement above anything else. Kenyatta died after fifteen years of enjoying massive political power, setting the arena for *siasa mbaya maisha mbaya* (politics is life) that Moi later adopted. Odinga died with all his dreams and ambitions for Kenya, a bitter lesson for the political opposition in this country. He died literally begging Kenyans to 'give me a chance even for one day' but ethnic nationalism, led by Kenneth N. Matiba led to the splitting of FORD, a vehicle he would have used to get political power. He had begun his politics as at Maseno School in the 1940s as a teacher where he questioned the logic of teaching mathematics using Western formula. He had his own methods of teaching Mathematics, he argued. Odinga then joined politics with his opposition to colonial land policies in Nyanza in the 1950s and in 1957-58, as a member of the Legislative council, he fought for the release of Jomo Kenyatta and other nationalist who had been detained in 1952 when the Mau Mau rebellion had broken out. Later, in the 1960s, he was opposed to Kenyatta's policies of economic liberalization without

taking care of the poor, for which he lost his number two position in the government, earning the wrath of the state. This led to the Kisumu disturbances in 1969, in which 26 school children were shot by police. Odinga had warned his political nemesis and an ally of Kenyatta, Tom J Mboya against aligning himself with neo-colonial politics and Mboya, a leading trade unionist was later assassinated in 1969. In the 1980s there were attempts to rehabilitate him by the Moi regime, but he refused to join the ruling Mafia in land grabbing in the country's cities and the Rift Valley province. Odinga and Kenyatta enjoyed massive support from their Luo and Kikuyu ethnic groups respectively, where they were literally regarded as political prophets by their followers. Kenyatta suffered a bout of unpopularity from the Coast, whose inhabitants accused him of grabbing their land along the coastal beaches, from Nyanza for marginalizing the intellectuals, and from North Eastern Province for the killing of innocent citizens. The killings of the innocent citizens in north-Eastern region occurred in the 1970s due to the perceived Shifta (Somali) rebellion. The Somali inhabitants there had been driven by ethnic nationalism and so wanted to secede and join the greater Somalia. In response the government sent military forces to quell the insurgency leading to loss of lives.

Odinga was the darling of radical intellectuals in Nairobi, Kampala and Dar-Es-Salaam, but was perceived to be un-electable for the presidency because he was not circumcised and hence was unfit to lead until he passed on in 1993. Because he died fighting to get political power, many Kenyans but especially his Luo community, continued with the war for the second liberation against the oppressive political system and against their perceived marginalization and this culminated in ethnic consciousness and nationalism among the Luo as well as the deep hatred for Kenyatta, the stumbling block against their ambition. There is no doubt that the ideological wars between Kenyatta and Odinga set the ground for the ethnic hatred between the Kikuyu and the Luo that culminated to the animosity and post-election violence in December 2007, in which the Kikuyu were the greatest losers. For Kenya to have peace, the two ethnic groups must work together as they did in 1963 when they brought independence, in 1992 their unity and that of other Kenyans led to the multiparty system being re-introduced, and finally in 2002 when the dreaded Luo-Kikuyu union led to the rejection of presidential candidate, Uhuru Kenyatta, perceived to have been Moi's "project". As a result, (KANU) was ejected from power and when the two communities disunited in 2007, the lights went off Kenya.

#### IV. METHODOLOGY AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

As far as theoretical orientation is concerned, ethnicity has been discussed under the primordial and essentialist concepts. The primordial approach views ethnicity as an embedment of individuals to 'tribal groupings' (PG Okoth, 2008, 147). Thus primordial ties are normally persistent and often form the basis to legitimize political groupings. It these age-old ties, which tie individual members of ethnic groups to support and even risk their lives for collective benefit of the members (ibid). In a nutshell, primordial means those aspects of life which we inherit and we can do nothing to change. It is the strength of the ethnic bond that supersedes other motives including economic gains for action to benefit the group. Yet such benefits accrue only to the elites of the group and hardly trickle down to *wananchi* (citizens). Accordingly, "anthropologists believe that ethnic groups or cultures provides peoples with a unitary sense along various dimensions: ascriptive (labeling), moral (normative) and cultural (linguistic and artifactual)" (Gil-White, 1999, 46). Accordingly thus, an ethnic group understands itself as different from other groups and hence it is labeled by "others" in the same fashion as having a distinctive culture and whose members preferred each other to non-members. Another vital concept is instrumentalist theory, which is applicable to this paper. It views ethnicity as a tool by which individuals, groups and elites achieve material objectives. It breeds conflict when individuals pursue personal interest through the mobilization of ethnic groups (PG Okoth, 147). This concept is germane to this study because both Jaramogi Odinga and President Kenyatta always favoured and sympathized with their respective 'tribes' when it came to politics. In supporting the essentialist view, Osamba states that 'access to state power in Kenya was regarded as an excellent opportunity for various groups because the state controls almost all aspects of economic and political life' (Osamba, 2001, 37). That explains why each ethnic group in Kenya and Africa in general, tries to mobilize to ensure or safeguard that access. The selfish ambition of the ruling elite such as Odinga and Kenyatta "was often presented as an ethnic interest and as a general struggle for the survival of the community (Osamba, 2001: 46). Thus ethnic consciousness increases in scope and intensity, and the "the socio-economic atmosphere becomes charged with tension" (Ibid). This kind of tension, between the two leaders led to violence that took place in Kisumu in 1969 following the death of the popular politician Tom Mboya. Lonsdale has argued strongly that, "ethnicity was a question of honour within what have become 'tribes' before it was a weapon of conflict between them" (Lonsdale, 1992, 315). For him ethnicity has been a vehicle of achieving sectional ambition (ibid). He points out that ethnicity reflected the

isolation of closed minds, nationhood commerce of people and ideas (Lonsdale, 334). He concludes that "Tribes" were bound by kinship and religion, not open to renegotiation. Applying those concepts in this paper is thus essential in trying to fathom the intensity and logic of ethnic animosity in Kenya's political history.

##### a) 1963-1978: Peace and Stability Amidst Oppression

Professor Bethwel Ogot has correctly pointed out that Kenya faced a myriad of problems that included the transition from the colonial to the first independent government, the adverse influence of settler dominance, and the Africanization of White Highlands by the Kikuyu elite, among other attempts to weave through these problems (Ogot, 1995). Belatedly, Odinga and Kenyatta, planted the seeds of ethnic struggle as they consolidated ethnic based competition for resource allocation. On 12 December 1963 Kenya became began, based on ethnic supremacy, with Kenyatta siding with Tom Mboya, a member of Odinga's ethnic group to vilify Odinga as a communist who was not fit to lead Kenya. Several manipulations pursued by the Kiambu Mafia followed, and in 1964, in order to exclude Odinga from any automatic succession, a new succession formula was introduced in the country's laws to the effect that should the president die in office parliament would elect a successor to finish his term (Ogot, 1995: 188).

Ogot argues that between July 1967 and June 1968, there was a more acrimonious change-the-constitution debate this time intended to frustrate Tom Mboya, the other important Luo leader, from succeeding Kenyatta, by allowing the Vice President to succeed the President for 90 days. Having curtailed Odinga and Mboya, there were more wars between 1976 and 1977. This period witnessed the pitched struggle for the control of KANU between supporters of Vice president Moi and Dr Njoroge Mungai, a powerful Minister, a struggle that was guided by ethnic desire by the Kiambu mafia to control Kenya and the ruling party. Thus life was made more difficult for the Vice President. Yet at the beginning of territorial nationalism, both Kenyatta and Odinga pursued national interests devoid of ethnic cleavages. For Tom J Mboya, nationalism meant the 'mobilization of all available groups of people (Kenyans) in the country for single struggle for *uhuru* (independence) (Berman 1995). In Kenya generally decolonization was driven by nationalist fervor, but sooner rather than later, ethnicity was taking over.

##### b) 1978-2002: Moi's One Man Rule

In the words of Karimi and Ochieng in their famous book, the Kenyatta Succession, published in 1980, it is stated that "realpolitik always forced Kenyatta to appoint non-member of GEMA, indeed a non-Kikuyu, to the post of the Vice-President" (Karimi and Ochieng 15). Thus after Odinga resigned from the post, he appointed Joseph Murumbi to the position but he lasted

only a few months, before Daniel arap Moi was picked. But there was always, a kitchen cabinet, a group around Kenyatta who might not have been related to him by blood or marriage but were members by virtue of financial or other interests and this included Dr Njoroge Mungai, nephew, Mbiyu koinange, brother-in-law, Peter muigai Kenyatta, son, ngegi Muigai, nephew and Udi Gecaga, son of a niece, Margaret, wife, James Muigai, brother and Beth Mugo, niece (Karimi and Ochieng, 15). It was the wish of this group that one of them succeeds Kenyatta as President. It was for this motive that this group (referred to as the "Family" by Karimi and Ochieng, (15-17). Contrary to their wish, however, on 22 August 1978, President Kenyatta died in Mombasa and as Ogot observes, "Power quietly passed to the hands of Daniel arap Moi" (Ogot, 26). His policies, based on *nyayo* (footsteps) were guided by forgiveness, national unity, bringing Odinga back to the fold, releasing all political detainees and forgiving *ngoroko* fighters, among others. He vowed to follow the policies of former President. In his approaches to dealing with perceived opponents, he seemed to have perfected the art of manipulation under Kenyatta (Nangulu-Ayuku, 2007, 245).

The Kikuyu had initially underestimated Moi as "a passing cloud", (Karimi and Ochieng, 40-45) though they were themselves divided with Charles Njonjo and Kibaki backing Moi while Njoroge Mungai and Mbiyu Koinange supporting the Kikuyu wing, who wanted to retain power after Kenyatta (Karimi and Ochieng, 15-17). President Moi released all the 26 political detainees as a sign of reducing ethnic animosity. In fact, in his first few years in power Moi hardly practiced "tribalism", preferring to side with the Kikuyu and gradually bringing in the Luo, especially former KPU detainees who had been incarcerated by President Kenyatta. He appointed Odinga to be Chairman of the Cotton Lint and Seed Marketing Board to give him a second chance in public life in 1980. Another effort towards this rehabilitation was his directive that the press and politicians should stop besmirching the names of ex-KPU politicians from Nyanza by referring to them as radicals (Ogot, 1995:194). In 1980 President Moi convened the Third Leaders' Conference (his first one) at the Kenya Institute of Administration in Nairobi. It was this Conference that declared war on negative ethnicity and all ethnic-based associations for the sake of national unity. Consequently, the Gikuyu Embu and Meru Association (GEMA), the Luo Union East Africa, the Abaluyia Association, the Miji-Kenda Organization, the Kalenjin Association and the Akamba Union were all banned. But was Moi sincere in declaring negative ethnicity dead? Was he only trying to clip the wings of the Kikuyu and the Luo, the two communities that bore the brunt of his administration later in 1990s? This might be the case because as Ogot (1995) points out, GEMA had become

a powerful economic and political bulwark in Kenya. How was GEMA formed?

It was formed by Kikuyu leaders, supported by President Kenyatta, in 1971 as a cultural and social organization led by Gikonyo Kiano and Jeremiah Nyaga. Two years later, Njenga Karume, a successful businessman in Kiambu, replaced Kiano as the undisputed leader of the association, with huge expansion on its financial base. Ogot argues that the role of these ethnic organizations in national unity was doubtful. For example, GEMA Holdings Limited later became so influential and economically powerful that Moi probably perceived it as a threat to his firm grip and control of political affairs over the Kikuyu ethnic group. Similarly, the Luo Union formed, in 1940s under the influence of Jaramogi Odinga as a way of promoting the economic welfare of the Luo people (Odinga, 1967). It had become a political vehicle used by Odinga to mobilize finance and social capital for political and economic control of his Luo ethnic group. It became a formidable political force in the hands of Odinga and his cronies, thus posing competition to Moi's scheme of controlling the politics of Kenya from the Lake region to the Indian Ocean at the Coast. Though the ideas of forming these ethnic associations were noble, some, like GEMA threatened the ruling party, KANU with their substantial financial clout. In 1974, for instance, the leader of the Akamba movement, Mulu Mutisya, was appointed to parliament, from where he assumed the position of a 'king maker' in Ukambani, just like Odinga and Kenyatta had done in Nyanza and Kikuyuland. Thus, what became clear to Moi was that "ethnic loyalty and solidarity could [not] be reconciled with national loyalty and unity" (Ogot 197). Despite banning these associations, ethnicity and ethnic nationalism continued to permeate the Kenyan society in its entirety as Moi promoted his Kalenjin people to major positions in the civil service, the private sector, and the military in the 1990s, having edged out Kenyatta loyalists from plum positions in the government.

The Luo and the Kikuyu later became victims of wide-ranging political and economic manipulations hence, their coming together in 1990s to champion the call for multiparty politics and more democratic space. As a result of dissatisfaction with the political establishment Odinga led Martin Shikuku, a veteran of the Lancaster House London talks, Ahmed Bamahariz of Mombasa, Masinde Muliro, former freedom fighter and later Minister in the first republic, James Orendo, the fiery politician from Ugenya and Kenneth Matiba among others, to form a formidable political force, FORD as a vehicle of wresting power from Moi and his cronies in 1991 (Nangulu-Ayuku, 243-280). But once again, in 1991-1992, the Kikuyu-Luo rivalry of the 1960s reared its ugly head, this time pitting Odinga against Matiba, who was ailing in a London hospital, having suffered when he was put in solitary detention for challenging Moi. The

Odinga-Matiba rivalry was not ideological but ethnic. The Luo felt that they could not back another Kikuyu for the presidency, having done so in 1963 when they supported Kenyatta and subsequently suffered considerably from the move. Opposition unity was scuttled in the 1990s mostly due to failure on the part of the Kikuyu and the Luo to unite and provide political direction for the nation. Ethnic nationalism never allowed this sort of nation-wide unity of purpose to thrive, and Moi continually pursued this trajectory of divided house to beat Matiba and Odinga in 1992 and 1997 (Nangulu-Ayuku, 2007). When such unity was achieved in 2002, KANU was sent packing.

Opposition from professors and lecturers from the University of Nairobi posed a big headache for Moi in the 1980s and the 1990s. Radicalized ex-KPU members had been refused to address University students at Taifa Hall in the 1974. This precedent, and several others afterwards, set in motion a long period of government intolerance to academic freedom and free thought (Ogot, 1995: 197). In 1972, the editors of a University newsletter, the *Platform*, had been arrested for criticizing the government as a result of which there were riots and the closure of the university. The same riots happened in 1975 when a prominent politician and businessman, JM Karuiki, was assassinated. The university riots in the 1970s and 1980s targeted mainly Luo and Kikuyu Professors, who were seen as opposing the Moi and Kenyatta regimes. In 1982, four years after taking power, Moi was jolted by an attempt to overthrow his government, which was, however, unsuccessful. All the same from 1982 onwards, Moi became more intolerant to any opposing ideas to his rule, and most victims were Luo and Kikuyu, as exemplified by the detention of Gibson Kamau Kuria, Prof Alfred Otieno, Anyang Nyongo, Shadrack Gutto, Korwa Adar, Ngugi wa Thiongo (1978), Michael Chege, and Atieno Odhiambo, among others, all regarded by the government as Marxists (Atieno-Odhiambo, 1998).

By 1991-92, the Luo and the Kikuyu found themselves in another ethnic duel over the control of FORD, a strong political party with its grassroots in the urban centers. Both Odinga and Matiba, a former Minister, wanted to control this political vehicle to get power from president Moi. Due to this division, Moi won the 1992 and 1997 General elections. The difference came in 2002 when for the first time since in 1963, the Luo united with the Kikuyu to oppose Uhuru Kenyatta, who was Moi's handpicked candidate. In this election, the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) led by Mwai Kibaki, a Kikuyu and Raila Odinga, a Luo and the son of Oginga Odinga, won with a landslide. But negative ethnicity was experienced sooner rather than later. Raila, and his party, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), accused President Kibaki of several failures, including his failure to implement the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in which Raila Odinga had been

promised the Prime Minister's position, but was never appointed. The Luo-Kikuyu rivalry erupted afresh, engulfing the whole nation, and ethnic nationalism took over. This tension was manifested in the 2005 Referendum for a new constitution, in which the opposition, led by Raila, defeated the government of Kibaki, setting the ground for the high political temperatures that followed. The animosity between the two ethnic groups, now took a national dimension, with the rest of the country siding with either the Luo or the Kikuyu. The consequence was that the 2007 elections were held amidst these tensions, leading to un-precedented violence in the country due to the perception that the elections had been stolen. This violence led to the death of 1,133 people and the displacement of more than 300,000 Kenyans, mostly Kikuyu, who suffered the worst ethnic violence as victims of the long-term ethnic rivalry in Kenya.

## V. CONCLUSION

This set to discuss the roots of the political conflict between Odinga and Kenyatta that resulted to political tension between the Luo and the Kikuyu since 1963. It is noted that the principal problem was the race for political control in Kenya. Having fought the colonial system together, the two leaders who had pursued different ideological trajectories, sought to gain ethnic support from their respective ethnic communities to fight for power. Guided by the patron-client and primordial/essentialist theoretical concepts, the paper has highlighted the historical roles of Odinga and Kenyatta in enhancing negative ethnicity and the nationally unhealthy Kikuyu-Luo rivalry in post-independence Kenya. Although the British colonialists encouraged divisionism along the 'tribe', it was the events that followed Odinga's resignation from the government in 1966 that fermented and heightened the ethnic divide between the Luo and Kikuyu. The lack of political space caused by Kenyatta's high-handed rule led to radical politics by the masses, the university students and lecturers and civil bodies, to launch for good governance and more democratic space. Ethnic discrimination and marginalization, particularly of the Luo, led to animosity within the political divide, leading to the 1969, 1982, 1992 and 2007 ethnic violence in the country.

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