

Comparing the Capitalist and Socialist Models and Levels of Ethnopolitical Violence in Kenya

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Preconditions in Kenya and Tanzania

At the superficial level, Kenya and Tanzania's linear history and cultural development is strikingly similar. Both countries became independent from the United Kingdom in the early 1960s. The ethnic distributions of the two countries, as well as their populations, are almost exactly the same, with a high concentration of Bantu-speaking peoples. Due to their close proximity, the climate is the same as well as much of the geography. Thus, both countries' peoples depended mostly on subsistence farming before colonization. After independence from the UK in the early 1960s, both countries' governments favored a one-party government, promoting the idea that one-party politics inhibit corruption and legislative stagnation associated with polarized politics which has left in its wake a legacy of de facto authoritarianism. However, when compared to Tanzania, since the 1960s, Kenya has experienced more frequent instances of ethnic violence, aggression, and terrorist threats. This is explained in large part by Kenya's long history of politicians fomenting ethnic tension to get ahead and often to serve themselves economically. In both cases, a shift to multi-party politics in the early 1990s have left much of the old authoritarian system in place, despite both countries' efforts to promote a more electorally democratic model. However, while Tanzania's political and economic instability as a result of the shift did not exacerbate ethnic tensions, the shift to pluralism in Kenya catalyzed widespread social and political unrest which caused citizens to question the effectiveness of Kenya's government. At the same time, while Tanzania's economy has stagnated in recent decades due to flaws in socialist structural readjustment, Tanzanian

emphasis on nationhood and political transparency created a lasting sense of state legitimacy among Tanzanian citizens. This sense of legitimacy has led to a relatively more peaceful coexistence among ethnopolitical groups in Tanzania than in Kenya.

Kenya's Early Movers, Conflict Over Land and Capital, and the Road to Political Corruption

Kenya's move to a capitalist economy reflected the sentiments of the period, wherein Western countries were eager and optimistic to see Western liberal models applied in Africa (Heatherington, 1993). Kenyans themselves believed that the institutions introduced by colonialism would allow Kenya to gain an edge on other African countries, and the government actively promoted the idea that Kenya would be a "friend to the West (wa Githingi & Holmquist, 2008, 344)." However, this optimism quickly turned to pessimism, after the ascension of Daniel arap Moi in 1978.

Kenya's 1963 Constitution was modeled after the United Kingdom's, with a parliamentary bicameral system. After independence, the Kenya African National Union (KANU) party elected Jomo Kenyatta as Prime Minister, who led the government from 1964 to 1978. In 1969, Kenyatta advocated for the reform of the *Mojimbo* System (meaning 'shared power') which was inspired by the United Kingdom. Kenyatta's new 1969 constitution created a unitary system: a unicameral legislature with a president instead of a prime minister. These changes concentrated considerable power in the presidency and allowed Kenyatta to become a somewhat benevolent authoritarian. At the time this decision

was justified by the idea that a unitary system would allow for greater efficiency in government by parrying party polarization (wa Githingi & Holmquist, 2008, 354). To some extent, this was true As David Throup writes, “this period of 1967 to 1978 was characterized by a burgeoning civil society, an effective judiciary, freedom of the press, increased consciousness of trade unions and greater freedoms for the general population (Throup, 1993).” This was largely due to Kenyatta’s favoring of the Kikuyu tribe and its allies (about twenty-two percent of the population) (Barkan, 2004), whom he represented and who benefitted from his largesse. Kenyatta re-distributed land that was given back to the Kenyan government by European countries after independence to the Kikuyu and ally tribes. These well-off constituents were able to accumulate considerable private capital and re-invest in civil society. Additionally, foreign direct investment steadily increased during the 1970s, and overall, GDP grew approximately 6% each year during Kenyatta’s presidency (Mwega, 2008). Despite economic progress and wealthy Kikuyu’s investment in civil society, Kenyatta’s obvious favoring of certain tribes entrenched politicians’ practice of manipulating ethnonational ties in order to get ahead in government. This had the insidious effect of creating the conditions for ethnic violence during Daniel arap Moi’s presidency and into the twenty-first century.

Kenyatta hand-picked Daniel arap Moi to become president in 1978. Moi represented the Kalenjin tribe, and more broadly, all those tribes that had been relatively disadvantaged by Kenyatta’s presidency. Increasingly, these groups called for more capital, and gradually Moi redistributed land away from the Kikuyu and to these tribes and groups

(Mwega, 2008, 5). These policies were initially regarded as favorable by the majority of the population (of course, at the expense of the Kikuyu), however they also exacerbated ethnic tensions. Jeni Klugman, a development economist, writes of Kenya, “land is the most manifest dimension of unequal access to resources (KNCHR, 2009).” Growth significantly declined during this period both due to Moi’s policies and a series of exogenous shocks like droughts and heavy rains throughout the 80s and 90s. After a failed coup attempt in 1982, Moi fired civil servants and replaced them with members of his own tribe and those ‘loyal’ to him (Jennings, 2002). The result was an increase in poverty from forty-eight to fifty-six percent of the population (Barkan, 8) and corruption became rife within the government which led to numerous Human Rights violations. A patron-client relationship developed, and the system polarized competition over resources which were increasingly becoming privatized as a result of Moi’s ethnically motivated policies. Moi transferred control of forty of eighty-five state-owned enterprises to Kalenjin people during the 1980s (Kniss, 2010). As a result, elections became compromised along the lines of ethnic and regional ties, and these elections became a common driver for conflict and violence.

Kenya’s Hyper-Competitive Elections

The already considerable legacy of horizontal inequality between ethnic groups left by Kenyatta became even more stark during Moi’s twenty-four-year reign and after, with ultra-competitive elections in which politicians were often explicit in their attempts to monopolize on ethnic

tensions to get elected. Before the 1992 Presidential Elections, Moi pledged to transition Kenya's government to a pluralistic, multi-party system. However, considerable ethnic violence broke out. Government officials, religious leaders, members of the electorate, and even members of Moi's own party found that Moi "fomented the clashes as a way of proving that multi-party politics would not work," and thus proving that the country needed him as an authoritarian leader (Perlez, 1992). It was later found as accusers suspected: that the elections had been rigged, and Moi's KADU (Kenya African Democratic Union Party) stayed in power. The Waki Report (The Commission of Inquiry on Post-Election Violence) analyzing Kenya's elections found that, "Kenya's long history of the deliberate use of violence by politicians... plus the decision not to punish perpetrators... has led to a culture of impunity and a constant escalation of violence... which is now largely outside of the control of the State and its security agencies (TJRC, 2008)."

The fraudulent elections of 1992 and 1997 angered tribes who had been disadvantaged by Moi's rule and engendered a devolution of state control over coercion as protests became violent. Moi's use of instrumentalism thus became the center of ethnic violence in the early 2000s and onward, as the public effectively lost trust in centralized government and instead turned to vigilantism to protect themselves.

Kenya's Present: Devolution over the Monopoly on the Use of Force, Vigilantism and State Weakness

During the 1990s, in which violence ebbed and flowed and centered around

the elections of 1992 and 1997, a new radical Kikuyu group called the Mungiki formed in opposition to President Moi and his policies which oppressed the Kikuyu. The groups called for the end of Moi's presidency, pre-colonial tribal traditionalism, Christianity, and the cultural and political unity of the Kikuyu peoples. As Grace Wamue writes the group was a "moralistic critique of the failings of the modern state in Kenya, (Wamue, 2001, 453)" as evidenced by the Kenyan government's failure to justly serve its citizens. The most poignant aspect of the Mungiki movement, however, was its transition from simply excluding other tribes to intimidation and terrorism. The group radicalized and quickly consolidated power in parts of Nairobi and rural areas in the early 2000s and declared that it would partner with the Taliban after having converted to Islam. In a series of violent incidents in Nairobi, the Mungiki stripped women naked in the streets, and fought with other gangs over the control of *matatu* (busing routes) (Anderson, 2002, 538). The group began "self-policing" by setting up restricted, bordered, areas. In 2001, the Mungiki bribed or threatened police officers and their families, and by the end of the summer, the group had already converted six thousand government police officers and fifteen-hundred CID officers (Anderson, 2002, 538). Press speculation indicated that Mungiki was being aided by members of the Kikuyu KANU party (Kenya African Nationalist Union) through political sponsorship, demonstrating the extent to which instrumentalism became entrenched in party politics and thus contributed to the emergence ethnic violence.

The Mungiki's self-policing engendered a call for vigilantism by other tribes and other tribes began to copy efforts made by the Mungiki. The Kenya Police Department dissolved due to tribe bribery, causing the government to lose its control over policing. Statistics compiled by the Kenyan 'Safer Cities Programme' indicate that during this period there was "high incidence of crime, the vulnerability of specific groups, and the targeting of certain locations," as vigilante groups began asking for bribes in exchange for protecting homes and small businesses (Stavrou & ITDG-EA, 2001, 4-5). Additionally, reports of violence against women and girls exponentially increased after the advent of self-policing (Odhiambo, 2018). However, citizens see vigilante groups to be the lesser of two evils: either oppression by the government or 'community policing.' Public perception demonized the government as citizens began to believe that the state could no longer be a "guarantor of social order" and that vigilantism filled this niche in society (Nina, 2000, 18).

Kenya's move towards vigilantism as a legitimate coercive force has thus exacerbated already-prominent indicators of state weakness, evident in the lack of cross-cutting regional and ethnic ties and trust in the state. As of 2013, Kenya was seventeenth on The Fund for Peace's *Failed State Index* (Fund for Peace, 2018). Since the 2007 elections, both the Kibaki and Kenyatta (son) governments have tried to curb vigilantism through the reform of civil service and security forces, tackling corruption, and insisting on constitutional reform. However, the 2018 Human Rights Watch Report still posits that the "lack of accountability for serious human rights violations, perpetrated largely by security forces,

remains a major concern in 2018 (Roth, 2019)" and thus shows that higher-profile restructuring of governmental and social practices are necessary to bring lasting peace to the region.

Tanzania's African Socialism

In 1967, after the integration of Tanganyika and Zanzibar to form Tanzania as we know it today, President Julius Nyerere and his socialist government pursued a sweeping transition from the institutions of capitalist colonialism to socialism. This he did after a five-year period of economic and foreign policy failure at the hands of Western capitalism after the country's independence in 1961. From then on, he reportedly became 'disinterested' with Western models of development, especially as he saw his neighbor to the north Kenya becoming increasingly reliant on these models (Nyerere, 1975, 139). Indeed, Nyerere had not ever intended to par for the course of capitalism. He had coined the term African Socialism, or *ujamaa* (meaning familyhood, community, socialism), in the 1950s to emphasize mixing of broad Western and Asian notions of socialism with the "communitarianism" of African culture and an emphasis on egalitarianism to create a distinctly African socialist movement (Nyerere, 1975, 139). In the same way as Kenya's Jomo Kenyatta, Nyerere established himself as a de jure benevolent authoritarian with a unitary, one-party democracy which established power heavily in the executive. Nyerere wielded this power to expediently transition Tanzania to his African Socialist regime. In doing so, he also made himself and the TANU party (Tanzania African Nationalist Union) the ideological touchstone for African communitarianism.

Nyerere first focused on the transition from Western capitalism to socialism in the economy, which he saw as “*sine qua non* for the accomplishment of other directives (Nyerere, 1975, 140),” manifesting a Marxist version of the Washington Consensus. He endeavored to ensure that the country did not grow overly dependent on Western capitalist structures like foreign direct investment. Because the United Kingdom and other Western countries had invested heavily in Kenya rather than Tanzania, this was a relatively easy task. Nyerere’s reluctance to allow foreign investment began as a hope to parry path dependency which he saw developing in 1961-1966, but it then became a call to a distinctly Tanzanian nationalism. He called this a process of “self-reliance (World Development, 2018).” In closely following Soviet and Chinese models, Nyerere’s focus turned to rapid and meaningful industrialization. He also set aside banking and housing, insurance, and agriculture for government control (World Development, 2018).

Second and more importantly, the Constitution of 1965 stated that “no tribal language could be used at meetings and no appeal for votes could be made on grounds of race, tribe or religion (Nyerere, 1975, 143).” The electoral and campaign systems were thus designed to prohibit the use of instrumentalism in politics. Despite Tanzania’s one-party system, politicians were able to represent diverse group interests across tribal borders. It was also made possible that politicians were held accountable by their constituencies. The prohibition of discriminatory language in politics and campaigning allowed for greater campaign transparency as well, and Tanzania’s elections almost always included a peaceful transition of power.

Nyerere’s Ideological Legacy

Even beyond his policymaking, Nyerere highlighted in his speeches that socialism was not radical, that he was not ‘converted’ by any foreign power. Most importantly, he emphasized the communitarianism and neighborliness of socialism, stating in 1975, “One of the most socialistic achievements of our society was the sense of security it gave to its members, and the universal hospitality on which they could rely...we must re-educate ourselves; to regain our former attitude of mind. In our traditional African society, we were individuals within a community. We took care of the community, and the community took care of us. We neither needed nor wished to exploit our fellow men (Nyerere, 1977).”

Nyerere’s policy reflected his ideology in that he endeavored to empower people across ethnic ties rather than individual groups. Major successes of Nyerere’s reforms were seen in TANU’s investment in youth education. TANU began a widespread rural education initiative in the 1970s, and young Tanzanians (both male and female and across tribal borders) were encouraged to go to school nine months out of the year. Schooling fostered socialism in the curriculum, imparting TANU’s values into children as well as theoretical and vocational skills. This effort created a mass of young people who were dedicated to socialism and helping to build a more equitable civil society (Nyerere, 1977, 148). Additionally, TANU led an aggressive initiative to move desolate rural citizens into village holdings indiscriminate of ethnic ties and incentivized them to farm collectively. This both allowed different tribes to coexist relatively peacefully,

but also allowed the government to take hold of private rural holdings and transition them to state-controlled agriculturalization (Nyerere, 1977, 148). These reforms had lasting effects on the relationships between diverse Tanzanian groups and have led to a relatively peaceful coexistence between tribes even as flaws were exposed in Nyerere and TANU's models.

Lasting Legacies and the Transition to Multi-Party Government

African Socialism in practice has been proven to be flawed economically. Despite Nyerere's hopes, Tanzania's economy has grown more reliant on foreign capital and technology for its own building of import substitution industrialization. Corruption has risen because state bureaucrats have become the de facto bourgeoisie and a patron-client relationship began to grow between coffee farmers (Tanzania's most lucrative raw commodity) and state bureaucrats, leading to complaints of human rights violations. Indeed, bureaucrats themselves became a kind of privileged, stratified class (Costello, 1994, 1514). It was because of this that Nyerere's 1975 "villagization" plan which planned to empower rural poor by moving manufacturing to the countryside (evocative of Chairman Mao's Great Leap Forward) was a spectacular failure. Bureaucrats sabotaged plans or were lethargic in enacting policy in a bid to keep power (Bjerk, 2010). Additionally, the economics of African Socialism have proved fundamentally flawed. No sufficient manufacturing was developed, and the country's economy remains closely reliant on raw commodities like coffee. It is for this reason that critics of the statist model

question the effectiveness of Nyerere's African Socialism.

It is difficult to determine whether or not Tanzania is a weak state. In the fifty years after Nyerere and the transition to multi-party government, the same party (the Chama Cha Mapinduzi) has stayed in power the longest. Tanzania is sixtieth on the Fund for Peace's Fragile State Index due to low economic performance, poverty, and economic inequality, albeit with a strong sense of governmental cohesion (Fund for Peace, 2018). However, the legacy of Nyerere's principles permeated deep into civil society, creating a relatively pacifist relationship among ethnic groups and a strong sense of legitimacy in the population as a whole. In 1986, a British Oxfam consultant wrote, "Tanzania seems to engender a socialist enthusiasm in all who work there (Jennings, 2002)." Since Nyerere, no one ethnic group or tribe has predominated the others, largely due to the fact that ethnic ties weakened, thus eliminating much opportunity for tension.

Therefore, despite their intertwined histories, the political and cultural landscapes of Kenya and Tanzania are substantially different. While the hyper-competitive capitalist model allowed for Kenya to gain considerable economic prowess on the world stage, this wealth was not distributed horizontally between tribes. As Grace Wamue writes, the Kenyan population "strongly resented exploitation and the accumulation of massive wealth by a small proportion of Kenyans, especially in the top political ranks (Wamue, 2001, 453)," leading to both class and ethnic tension. These tensions have not been meaningfully ameliorated in recent years even as the current Kenyatta government tries to induce reform.

Meanwhile in Tanzania, poverty continues to plague the population as a result of flawed socialist policy, however the country remains relatively peaceful in comparison to Kenya. Indeed, the country has made meaningful progress in recent years in a bid for social reform. This has been done largely in the form of policy against domestic violence, child exploitation, and gender inequality (UN Women, 2018). The development of Tanzania and Kenya respectively demonstrate the centrality of political and economic ideology to shaping a country's interrelatedness, cultural sphere, and civil society. Therefore, the stark differences in the two countries thus highlight the hidden effects of method of governance on the overall strength of the state both politically and socially.

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