ETHNIC POLITICS VERSUS UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN KENYA

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Abstract
Ethnic intolerance is not specifically African problem. It affects many communities in the continents of the world. This paper limits itself to the Kenya situation only and how the intolerance affects university education. The paper is an outcome of desktop research and it demonstrates that ethnic chauvinism has negatively affected education in Kenyan public universities.

Introduction
Ethnicization of social identities and conflicts has been experienced across all the continents. Reference can be made to ethnic cleansing in former Yugoslavia. Widespread ethnic cleansing accompanied the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992–95). During the war, large numbers of Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks) and Bosnian Croats were forced to flee their homes and were expelled by Bosnian Serbs; and some Bosnian Croats also carried out similar campaign against Bosniaks and Serbs. The USA also experienced racial conflicts in the 1960s and 1970s.

In the Middle East, there has been Israeli 'democratic tribalism' based on distinct ethnic and sectarian groups. Over the past two decades, tribal groups from Saudi Arabia and the broader Arabian Peninsula have staged a socio-political comeback, claiming greater influence in the public sphere. Tribal values, mostly related to the former nomadic Bedouins, have been held in high esteem. They are active in various fields of endeavor such as social media, the legal sector, literary circles, television, and local politics. Here, tribal voices re-emerged from the physical and intellectual periphery and called for a re-evaluation of the tribes' role in Saudi society (Maisel, 2015). Perhaps, it is the 1994 Rwandan genocide, against the Tutsi, also called the 100 Days of Slaughter; by members of the Hutu majority government that displays the great lengths negative ethnicity can go.

From the foregoing discussion, ethnic particularism is not specifically African problem as some scholars thought it was. However, this paper limits itself only to the Kenya situation. It is argued in this paper that the issue of unequal distribution of resources is the major source of ethnic competition which is expressly politically and through state appointments. Universities in Kenya have had to operate in this ethnically polarized political environment. The consequences of this environment have been negative. This paper is an outcome of desktop research. The information relied on are government reports, academic researches and newspaper articles.

Statement of the Problem
Kenya is a highly ethnic society with 42 ethnic communities. Appointments to public offices have been seen as part of the political instruments used by political powers to reward and receive support from particular regions. According to NCIC (2016), tribalism is currently a major concern in many institutions with a clear lack of consideration of regional balance in appointments or promotions leading to a growing disproportionate distribution and dissatisfaction among personnel. In an environment of open ethnic bias, one wonders how this situation affects university education.

Objective of the Study
   1)   To demonstrate that ethnic chauvinism has negatively affected education in Kenyan public universities.

Ethnicity: A Theoretical Framework
This study has adopted Fredrik Barth's theory on ethnicity. Barth espoused his thoughts in the book, '*Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*' which was published in 1969. Barth is credited as one of the most dominant, and earliest, social anthropologists in the field of ethnicity. He focused on the boundaries between different groups through cultural identities such as language and religion. In 1997, a social anthropologist called Richard Jenkins published a book entitled '*Rethinking Ethnicity*'. In this book Jenkins expounded on the thoughts of Barth about ethnicity. Both Barth's and Jenkins' way of approaching the concept of ethnicity revolves around the interaction and boundaries between both social groups and individuals, and how these emerge through encounters. This way of conceptualising social interactions is interlinked with the fundamental notions of social constructionism, since this notion takes its point of departure in the social context and claims how this will determine one's self-perception, and moreover the social organisation of people.(Asmussen, P.S; Brochstedt, A; Jensen, L.I; Kjær, A.S; Krogholt, M.K & Mortensen, L.T, 2009)

The theories of Barth (1969) and Jenkins (1997) focus on cultural boundaries between different groups. This focus is relevant to current investigation of the conflicts between ethnic groups that have emerged between different ethnic groups in post-colonial Kenya. The different language groups in Kenya are used in this study for ethnic identification.

Ethnic Diversity and Conflicts in Kenya: A Historical Brief

The 42 ethnic communities in Kenya are identified based on language and cultural background. When classified according language, there are three main language groups in which the ethnic communities in Kenya can be grouped. These are the Bantu speaking, Nilotic speaking and Cushitic speaking groups. There are other distinct language groups such as the Arabs, Asians, Europeans and Americans.

According to the Housing and Population Census (2009), the largest five communities in Kenya are the Kikuyu (17.7%), Luhya (14.2%), Kalenjin (13.3%), Luo (10.8%) and Kamba (10.4%). However, the existence of peace or conflicts in Kenya has revolved around the Kikuyus and the Luos. These are the most active and dominant ethnic communities in terms of national politics in Kenya.

According to Owen (1995), African inter-ethnic conflicts are not as a result of the mere fact that the continent and national boundaries are brackets enclosing multi-ethnic groups but rather issues of ethnic grudges. He asserts that the past inter-ethnic conflict management strategies in Africa have tended to concentrate on symptoms of the effects and not the root causes. He further postulates that there are numerous socio-economic and political grudges between or within the numerous ethnic communities in African states.

One of the long term causes of the clashes in Kenya is attributed to the colonial legacy, which is essentially historical but with ramifications in the post-independence era. It is a historical fact that the indirect rule administered by the British colonialists later turned out to be the `divide and rule' strategy which polarized the various ethnic groups in Kenya. This in turn contributed to the subsequent incompatibility of these ethnic groups as actors on one nation-state called Kenya. It was unfortunate that the early political parties in Kenya that championed the nationalist struggle against colonial establishments were basically `distinct ethnic unions' (Nyukuri, 1997). Not much has changed. Political parties have continued to be associated with particular ethnic groups.

Land is yet another source of ethnic conflicts in Kenya, both in the long term and in the short term. For a long time in the history of this country, land has remained a thorny economic and political issue. In fact the land question is one of the main factors for the MAU MAU rebellion of 1952 to 1956 in Kenya and the subsequent declaration of the state of emergence by the British. It is on record that the largest beneficiaries of the land distribution programme during tenure of President Jomo Kenyattta were the Kikuyu and their allies, that is, the Embu and Meru. The Kikuyus were the main beneficiaries of the government's settlement plan for the landless at no cost or at minimal rates. They thus expanded their land ownership and settlement beyond their traditional home-Central Province into the Rift Valley province and a bit into the Coast province. The distribution of land formerly occupied by the white settlers to mainly the Kikuyu people was perceived by other ethnic groups as unfair and there were parliamentary debates that called for equal distribution. Unfortunately, these debates did not address the issue of ethnic imbalance and the subsequent animosity that later on degenerated in ethnic conflicts in the 1990s between the Kikuyu and the Kalenjins in the Rift Valley (Nyukuri, 1997).

Large-scale inter-ethnic violence is a new phenomenon in Kenya. The proximate causes of violence are intrinsically related to democratization and the electoral cycle; which are politically instigated, and not primordial. As the move to multi-partyism became increasingly probable, senior politicians in many political rallies issued inflammatory statements and utterances, asking for people to go back to their ancestral lands or they be forced out. The advent of the violent ethnic clashes closely followed these rallies (Human Rights Watch, 1993). As new political parties emerged, a clear enduring pattern of ethno-regional interests appeared. Eldoret was one of the scenes of land grabs and tribal clashes in the early 1990s permitted and perhaps directly supported by Moi (Kenya Human Rights Commission, 1998). The violence in Kenya appeared to be an ethnicized expression of political conflict. Ethnicity in this case, was the medium of political violence, not its cause. However, the system once in place, became self-perpetuating: it increased the likelihood of future conflict by sharpening ethnic identity and chauvinism, as well as promoting the doctrine that specific region of the country "belonged" to the groups that "originally" occupied them. This has led to new terms coming up such as "outsiders," "foreigners," "strangers" or "aliens," and this is regardless of the legal ownership of land and the constitutional right of all Kenyans to live anywhere of their choose within their country (Ndegwa, 1997).

The assassinations of Joseph Tom Mboya (a Luo) on July 9, 1969, a few months after the mysterious death of Argwings Kodhek, another prominent Luo politician intensified the ethnic animosity between the Luo and the Kikuyu. These deaths happened at the height of oathing ceremonies in Kikuyu land. President Jomo Kenyatta (a Kikuyu) supported the oathing activities. Those who took the oath were asked to vow that they would never allow the presidency to leave the "House of Mumbi" (which meant Kikuyu community). Secondly the ceremonies were meant to mobilize Gema communities against Jaramogi Oginga Odinga's Kenya People's Union (KPU) ahead of upcoming elections. Consequently, KPU was banned in October 1969 and Jaramogi Oginga Odinga was detained without trial alongside other leaders (Gatu, 2016). These events sent wrong signals to the Luo ethnic group who could not hide their emotions and anger during the visit of Jomo Kenyatta to

Kisumu in 1969. The mysterious death of Dr. Robert Ouko in February 1990 strained the relationship between the Luo and Kalenjin ruling elites. This could be considered as one of the long term causes of the conflicts between the Luo and the Kalenjin in the build-up to 1992 general multi-party elections and after.

In view of the above we understand why the major players and victims of politically motivated ethnic clashes in Kenya have been the Kikuyu, Luo and the Kalenjin. Kenya has had several serious outbreaks of election-related violence since the return to multi-partyism in 1991. In the 1990s, large-scale violence, mostly against Kikuyu and Luo communities, happened during the reign of President Moi, who was a Kalenjin. The most serious instance in the 1990s occurred immediately before and after the 1992 elections, when over 1,100 people were killed and 350,000 driven from their homes in brutal attacks both before and after the vote, mainly in Rift Valley Province. In 1997, similar attacks took place, though not as widespread, in Coast Province before the elections and in the Rift Valley afterwards. All of these attacks are believed to be state-induced violence, as senior government and ruling party officials organized and financed the attacks on members of ethnic groups who lived in zones dominated by the ruling party, Kenya African National Union (KANU), but generally supported the opposition. The attacks sought to disenfranchise, intimidate or punish those presumed opposition supporters and drive them away from areas where they were not historically 'indigenous' (Brown & Sriram, 2012).

The 2002 general elections, however, were far more peaceful. This was due to a combination of factors, but mainly because both main presidential contenders were Kikuyu leading to the non-alignment of ethnoregional identities with specific political parties and presidential candidates. This removed the utility of ethnicity-related violence as an electoral tool. However, the post-election violence that followed the announcement of incumbent Mwai Kibaki's re-election in the December 2007 presidential elections was a reawakening of ethnic rivalry in Kenya. The general elections of 2007 seemed to be a replay of the general elections of 1992, in terms of the ethnic violence that was experienced before and after. Prior to these elections, the political elite had been conducting a lot of campaigns focusing on the different ethnic identities that exist in the country.

Ethnic Competition and its effect on University Education in Kenya
The University of Nairobi (UON) has traditionally been the most politically active of Kenya's public universities. It is the country's oldest and most prestigious university with a history of producing radical student leaders. Many have gone on to become prominent national politicians, such as Hon William Ruto, the Deputy President, Hon James Orengo and rights campaigners, such as PLO Lumumba. UON's main campus is in the heart of Nairobi's central business district. During the 1980s and 1990s, UON students who opposed the excesses of President Daniel arap Moi's one-party state regularly engaged in battles with riot police. Because of its status, what happens at UON has traditionally influenced other public universities.

Kenya's university students have been a lot less radical since President Kibaki came to power in 2002. Reforms within the university system opened up a channel of communication with the administration. The introduction of parallel degree programmes for self-sponsored students, many of whom are older and combine their studies with jobs, has brought a more conservative element into universities campuses. Under Kibaki, there was greater freedom of speech, giving students other means to express their discontent than through violence. The student movement became localised, deradicalised and depoliticised on the basis of the perception that they had a new framework in terms of leadership and the struggle they had could be best won within government.

However, the 2007/2008 post-election violence reignited the politics of the student movement and ethnic wounds which appears to be one of the most divisive issues we have in Kenya right now. Most of Kenya's public universities delayed to reopen amid fears of riots and ethnic bloodshed following December 2007's disputed polls. For example, the opening of Maseno University in the opposition stronghold of Luo community was postponed until April instead of January 2008 because it was not considered safe for Kikuyu students from Central Province, the home turf of Kikuyu President Mwai Kibaki, to return. UoN opened for its undergraduate students on February 4 instead of January 7.

In February 2015, Senator Isaac Melly led political leaders from the Rift Valley in demonstrations against the Vice Chancellor of University of Eldoret - Professor Teresa Akenga (who is a Luhya) accusing her of corruption. Specifically, she was accused of impartiality in employment. However, other leaders felt that the Vice Chancellor may have been a victim of ethnic animosity since the leaders agitating for her removal did not produce a report to prove the allegation of corruption. Politics at the university has closely followed the national scene. The University of Eldoret was later closed indefinitely following riots by students. Anti-riot police were deployed to the institution as two separate groups of students, one supporting Prof Akenga and another calling for removal threatened to carry out fresh protests (Simpa, 2015).

On September 26, 2016 residents of the Rift Valley took to the streets to stand with their leaders and demand the removal of the new Moi University Vice-Chancellor Professor Laban Ayiro (who is a Luhya). Six days earlier, on September 20, 2016 Governors Jackson Mandago (Uasin Gishu) and Alex Tolgos (Elgeyo Marakwet) led other elected Members of Parliament

(MPs) and Members of County Assembly (MCAs) to storm the institution to demand the removal of Prof. Ayiro. Other leaders who took part in the protest were MPs Oscar Sudi (Kapseret), Sila Tiren (Moiben), James Bett (Kesses) and Uasin Gishu county assembly speaker Isaac Terer. According to the leaders Prof Ayiro had failed the test because he was an 'outsider'. The leaders said they didn't want an 'outsider' to head the university and demanded their own, a Kalenjin, be posted to the institution. The move received condemnation from across the country (Chweya, 2016).

University student politics is to a large extent like outside politics and voting has been loyal to ethnic identities. Everything about national politics has come in especially tribalism. University managements have many times pushed a hidden hand in students' elections to influence election outcome in their favour – often a group of student leaders which they can easily manipulate. One of the methods management has used is to bar particular students considered dangerous from contesting; many times the results have been destructive.

In 2014, at least 18 students were arrested and property of unknown value destroyed in riots at the Kenyatta University main campus, Nairobi. The students were protesting the decision by the university management to bar a candidate from contesting planned elections. The riots were sparked by the decision of the university management to bar Sammy Owino from running for the post of Presidency at KUSA over claims he had not followed the laid down procedure. There was no response from the management on the reasons to bar Owino from contesting. One would ask if there was no remedy in the event that Owino or any other student failed to follow the laid down procedure (Ombati, 2014).

In October 2015, students of Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology (JOOUST) went on strike. The students disagreed over the newly elected secretary-general after the losing candidate refused to concede defeat. This act was out of suspicion that the University management took away their victory and gave to a student they could work with. About three days later, Maseno University, a neighbouring institution, went on strike.

The Maseno University student riot in October 2015 was triggered by the death of a student who was on the campaign trail for the election of their representatives. The student fraternity suspected that the university management had favourite candidates vying for student positions. Students reported their dissatisfaction with the disqualification criteria which was used to bar Alfred Kiptum, from vying for chairmanship of the Kisumu Campus. Some students were also barred from contesting because they had fees balances. According to the students, these reasons were flimsy (Odhiambo, 2015).

A study by Gudo (2012) found that private and public universities in Kenya draw most of the students from the immediate surrounding community. It was found that 62.5% to 67.5% of students in universities outside Nairobi come from their immediate environment. Another study, Gudo (2016) found that Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology which is about 430 km from Nairobi attracts 62.8% of its students from regions which constitute its immediate environment The student interactions in these universities had very high chances of producing stereotype ethnic champions rather than nationalists. Majority of the students had gone through primary, secondary schools and university education within same ethnic community. Consequently, their nation was the ethnic community. The study showed that apart from University of Nairobi which enjoyed positive diversity, the university students had no benefit of diversified student population. This situation defeated the purpose of university education which is to create in learners, a capacity to effectively contribute in terms of work and productivity, towards national and international development. The admission policies private and public universities were ineffective in creating nationalists among students.

The essence of diversity in Kenya cannot be gainsaid. Meaningful development in Kenya can only be sustainable if inclusion and participation of all ethnic groups is guaranteed. The National Cohesion and Integration (NCI) Act No. 12 of 2008 underscores the significance of including all persons in economic and social processes. Article 7(1) of the NCI Act stipulates that, "All public establishments shall seek to represent the diversity of the people of Kenya in the employment of staff". Article 7(2) states that not more than a third of the total employees in one public institution should be from one ethnic group. This Act has been contravened by nearly all the public universities which have employed more than 33% of their staff from one ethnic community. A study by NCIC reveals that the most represented ethnic community in the employment of universities is the Kikuyu. The most disturbing aspect is staff recruitment, promotion and discipline which are conducted with one's ethnic community in mind. In some cases these are done in favour of ones sub-tribe.

Kenya is going for general elections in August 2017. The major players are President Uhuru Kenyatta from Kikuyu community against the leader of opposition Raila Odinga from the Luo community. The activities in Parliament in December 2016 in which contentious amendments to election laws were rushed through against all out resistance from the opposition not only took an ethnic character but also a pointer to what to expect in 2017 – street protests, violence and death. The two political sides are facing off in a context that has been strained by a crackdown on independent activities around elections including Presidential directive against civic education and banning operations of International Foundation for Elections

Systems, a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) that has supported Kenya's electoral programming since 2002. These actions by the Government signify new heights of intolerance and lack of commitment to holding credible elections. It should not surprise us to see a repeat of 2007/2008 post - election violence, unless the two protagonists rein in on their campaign troops. In terms of education, the consequences are severe. We are likely to experience uncertainty and delayed opening of schools including universities.

Conclusion

Kenyan politics has revolved around ethnic chauvinism and exclusion. The communities that produced the president and allies have tended to allocate themselves state resources disproportionately. The result has been over concentration of state resources in one area compared to another. The Luo community has been kept in the opposition since independence by the ruling Kikuyu and Kalenjin elites. That meant scarce state resources and retarded development for the community. In terms of university education, the quality of education has been put to question since existing learning environment is a kind inclined to producing ethnic chauvinists rather than national patriots. Universities have witnessed disruption of their academic calendars and programmes. University managements have tended to influence incognito the outcome of student elections. The students have responded brutally and violently through demonstrations and destruction of property and cases of student deaths have been reported.

Universities are centres of excellence and competing ideas. Its products are expected to excel and guide the process of national and international development. We are at time when those in leadership should rethink achieving future of the nation characterized by unity, peace and widespread development. This will require tolerance and dialogue from those in leadership.

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