The Anatomy of Authoritarianism: Power Saturation and the Reproductive Logic of Repression in Africa

By

Patrick Michael Ogeto

PhD student Department of Social sciences at

Laikipia University

Email: patrickogeto@gmail.com

Babere Kerata Chacha

Professor of History at the Department of Social Studies

Laikipia University.

Email bchacha@laikipia.ac.ke

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the enduring patterns of state-sponsored repression in Africa, with a particular focus on Kenya, where successive postcolonial governments have presided over systematic violations of human rights. Under the Kenyatta and Moi regimes, the state deployed a repertoire of coercive tactics including repressive legislation, arbitrary detention, harassment, torture, and targeted violence to silence dissent and consolidate political authority. These abuses were facilitated by constitutional and institutional arrangements that concentrated power in the executive, including deliberate manipulation of presidential term limits and the instrumentalization of development to achieve political advantage. Although Kenya has undergone significant political transformations, including the reintroduction of multiparty politics and constitutional reforms, the legacy of authoritarian governance continues to shape contemporary political behavior and state-society relations. Anchored in theoretical perspectives that link torture to institutional and structural violence, the paper interrogates the use of torture as a political technology and a historically embedded craft of repression in Kenya. It argues that despite Kenya's formal commitment to regional and international human rights norms such as the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights practices of coercion and impunity persist, revealing a persistent disjuncture between legal frameworks and political practice. By historicizing the "extension of power syndrome" and its implications for democratic governance, the paper illuminates the ways in which entrenched executive dominance undermines the realization and enjoyment of fundamental rights. Ultimately, this study contributes to broader scholarly debates on authoritarianism, repression, and human rights in Africa, offering insights into the institutional continuities that sustain illiberal political orders.

Key Words: *Autocracy, Imperialism, Repression and Underdevelopment*

Introduction: This paper interrogates the political logic through which the extension and stagnation of executive power produce repressive governance across African states. From the lens of authoritarian durability, neo-patrimonialism, and dialectics of omination the study argues that prolonged incumbency fosters institutional decay, weakens accountability structures, and entrenches personalized rule. As leaders consolidate power through constitutional manipulation, patronage networks, and securitized state apparatuses, political space gradually contracts, resulting in the systematic marginalization of opposition actors, civil society, and independent media. Using comparative case studies from East, Central, and West Africa, the paper demonstrates how the quest for regime survival incentivizes coercive practices such as surveillance, arbitrary arrests, electoral violence, and the strategic deployment of legal repression. The analysis further explores how external actors, resource politics, and shifting geopolitical alliances reinforce authoritarian resilience. I tis argued here that the craft of the autocrat is neither accidental nor purely coercive; rather, it is a deliberate governance strategy rooted in the control of institutions, narratives, and citizens' political agency. It is therefore, our convition that these dynamics is essential to explaining contemporary democratic backsliding on the continent and identifying pathways for restoring accountable, participatory, and rights-respecting political systems.

In Africa continent, there have been severe acts of human rights violation and economic repressions. This is as a result of witnessed dictatorship, autocratic regimes and "life presidency syndrome.' This has in return created under-developed states with poor economic growth subjecting many citizens into poverty, severe suffering and repression. Due to prolonged dictatorship by African leaders and presidents, Sub-Saharan Africa's development and growth trajectory has not been steady and smooth. This is to say that the continent has been faced by serious economic and political stagnation. It is the leaders' influence that can either promote development or under-development of a given country since they occupy the highest offices of public influence in their respective country and that they have the sole mandate of defending the established constitutions and policies on behalf of the people.[1]

It is therefore evident that political regimes that are established have a direct impact on Africa's development path. [2] Previous studies on public policy have indeed concluded that the continent's political landscape and regime changes have continued to influence political and economic growth.[3] Other literatures and studies that support this claim include the works of Jong-A-Pin and Mierau[4]; Jones & Olken,[5] and Jorgensen & Bjørnskov.[6] This paper looks at this phenomenon with regard to African leaders and in particular Kenya. This paper therefore considers that the African leaders have impacted positively on their respective countries' quest to

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[1] Jong-A-Pin, R. & Mierau, J. O., 2011. "No Country for Old Men: Aging Dictators and Economic Growth," Cambridge Working Papers in Economics 1158, Faculty of Economics, University of Cambridge.

[2] Easterly, William, "Democratic Accountability in Development: The Double Standard" Social Research, 77, no. 4. Winter 2010. Pg. 1075.

[3] "The Bottom Billion" by P. Collier. TED talks, MIT. March, 2008. Accessed 14th July 2022. www.ted.com/playlists/67/the_quest_to_end_poverty.html

[4] Jong-A-Pin, Richard, and Jochen O. Mierau. "No country for old men: Aging dictators and economic growth." (2011).

[5] Jones, B F, & Olken, B. A. (2005). Do leaders matter? National leadership and growth since World War II. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, *120*(3), 835-864.

[6] Jørgensen, C. M., & Bjørnskov, C. (2015). *Did Africa's first choices matter? Growth legacies of leaders at independence* (No. 1090). IFN working paper.

achieving increased and sustainable growth or not in respect of autocratic regimes which breed prolonged tenure as well as repression and violation of human rights.

Theoretical Approach

This paper is informed by neopatrimonialism theory as used by Clude Ake[7] and the concepts of crisis, control and dialects of domination by Bruce Burman.[8] Both theories are applied and used interchangeably. Neopatrimonialism theory suggests that a state is a system of social hierarchy where patrons use state resources in order to secure loyalty of clients in the general population. It is an informal patron-client relationship that can reach from very high in a state structure down to individuals in say, small villages.[9] Neopatrimonialism is therefore a form of political domination described by Max Weber[10] in which authority rests on the personal and bureaucratic power exercised by a royal household, where that power is formally arbitrary and under the direct control of the ruler. This last criterion implies that domination is secured by means of a political apparatus staffed by slaves, mercenaries, conscripts, or some other group (not a traditional land-owning aristocracy) which has no independent power-base.

The neopatrimonial approach to African politics has its origins in theories of modernization which sought to observe how newly independent countries in Africa and Asia developed into modern states, building on the foundations of modern state institutions (parliament, courts, system of government, and bureaucracy) that had been established by departing colonial powers.[11]It is also underpinned by Weber's[12] threefold categorisation of types of political authority: patrimonial, as found in traditional societies; rational-legal, as they have evolved in modern European societies; and charismatic. Neopatrimonial theory concludes that neopatrimonial personal relationships form "the foundation and superstructure of political institutions in Africa and that neo-patrimonial practice is the core feature of politics in Africa."[13] Moreover, "in the end what all African states share is a generalized system of patrimonialism and an acute degree of apparent disorder."[14]

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[7] Claude Ake, 'The Congruence of Political Economies and Ideolgies in Africa' in Gutkind and Wallerstein, eds., *The Political Economy of Contemporary Africa* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1976), p. 206.

[8] Berman argues that the colonial state was shaped by the contradictions between maintaining effective political control with limited coercive force and ensuring the profitable articulation of metropolitan and settler capitalism with African societies. This dialectic of domination resulted in both the uneven transformation of indigenous societies and in the reconstruction of administrative control in the inter-war period.

[9] See for example E. N. Shmuel, *Traditional Patrimonialism and Modern Neopatrimonialism*. (SAGE Publications, 1973).

[10] See Max Weber, Economy and Society, 1922.

[11] Shmuel Eisenstadt, *Traditional Patrimonialism and Modern Neopatrimonialism* (London: Sage, 1973), 1- 25; Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 212-240; and Christopher Clapham, Third World Politics: An Introduction (London: Routledge, 1985), 39-89

[12] Weber*, Economy and Society*, 212-240, and Hinnerk Bruhns, "Weber's Patrimonial Domination and Its Interpretation," in Neo-patrimonialism in Africa and Beyond, ed. Daniel Bach and Mamoudou Gazibo (London: Routledge, 2012), 9-24.

[13] Michael Bratton and Nicholas van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 63

[14] Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as Political Instrument* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), xix

In this paper, this theory is applied to guide how various governments (regimes) used state powers, resources and instruments to control and dominate politics by oppressing and repressing individual persons and organizations which were perceived to be oppositionists to the governments of the day. Building on this theory, a direct link has been suggested between the practices of neopatrimonial systems and political competition in the context of the current multiparty democracy in African countries.[15] In general, it is argued that neopatrimonialism disadvantages the opposition while favoring the ruling party and the political elites in the ruling class, as it allows not only the use of state resources to command political loyalty, but also the use of state bureaucracy to rig elections and even to orchestrate violence, creating conditions that allow regime parties and elites to retain control of power.

On the other hand, Bruce Burman's[16] political ideas of crisis and control and dialects of domination is applied to inform examine the colonial backgrounds of repression, dictatorship and autocracy in Kenya. Bruce Burman argues that the state has become the ultimate unit both of economic reproduction, or accumulation, and of political reproduction, or social control.

On dialects of domination, Fanon[17] noted, violence was inherent in inter-racial relations in settler colonies, and Ngugi[18]reiterated this point specifically in regard to Kenya.' When attempting to write a cultural history of white settlers, Ngugi found nothing of value. He observed only garish paintings in upscale Nairobi bars featuring scenes of colonial life: scrawny Africans pulling whites in rickshaws, a "long bull-necked, bull-faced settler" holding a sjambock (Afrikaans: whip) and his loyal (and well-fed) dog at his side. It was just such a scene, Ngugi refiected, that summed up white settlement: "The rickshaw. The dog. The sjambock. The ubiquitous underfed, wide-eyed, uniformed native slave. "In the end, as Ngugi put it, "Reactionary violence to instill fear and silence was the very essence of colonial settler culture."[19]

What we require is a detailed investigation into the uses and meanings of, and the ideology whites created to justify, interpersonal violence. Settlers believed that if they- did not beat their workers, Africans would shirk even more than they already did; they argued that Africans were childlike and the only punishment they understood was the lash; they used whippings with the kiboko to illustrate the right and might of settler rule; they lashed African men who "insulted" white women; they beat Africans who did not immediately do their bidding or proved bothersome. Thus the native slave, the rickshaw, and the whip.[20]

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[15] Staffan Lindberg and Jonathan Jones, "Laying a Foundation for Democracy on (sic) Undermining It? Dominant Parties in Africa's Burgeoning Democracy," 2010, paper prepared for chap. 11 of Dominant Parties and Democracy, ed. Matthijs Bogaards and Françoise Boucek (London: Routledge, n.d.), 1-19, http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/sil/downloads/Lindberg10%20&Jones_Domin%20Parties.pdf (accessed April 7, 2020).

[16] For discussions of this relative autonomy of the state, implicit and explicit, see R. Miliband, *The State in Capitalist Society* (London, 1973); and N. Poulantzas, *Political Power and Social Classes* (London, 1973). For an instance in the early development of relative autonomy see D. Hay, 'Property, authority and the criminal law', in D. Hay et al., Albion's Fatal Tree (London, I975).

[17] Franz Fanon, Wretched of the Earth (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1963); Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Detained: A Writer's Prison Diary (London: Heinemann, 1981), Chap. 2.

[18] Ngugi. *Detained,* 32.

[19] Ibid, p 271

[20] SEE Brett Shadle as he explores the meaning of the dog in the painting: *"Cruelty and Empathy, Animals and Race, in Colonial Kenya," Journal of Social History, 2012.*

As Arendt[21] argued, authority cannot fiow from violence. Settler violence emerged from fear and povverlessness. They had somehow to find a way to ensure the success, even the mere survival, of their community. Perpetually on the verge of bankruptcy, unable to rely on unquestioning state support, surrounded by thousands upon thousands of "savages": settlers had to assert power, to claim control of an anarchic situation. They turned to violence

Autocracy, Repression and Underdevelopment in Africa

Africa has witnessed a great share of autocratic rulers who have centralized power, resources and government instruments to prolong their stay in office. Therefore, in countries of dictators who are by their own volition and discretion law-makers, what now exists prominently is the long-serving ruler, a president for life, a "holy being" and an always right defender of citizens who invokes constitutional provisions and manipulate its clauses to suit his needs to propel his continued stay in power. Within the context of this paper, this is referred to as a 'political autocracy and dictatorship'.[22] By 1960s, most African countries had gained independence. Soon after colonialism, these countries established their own self-rule in the way they determined without any external influence. This saw the formation of governments under African leaders. Initially, this was a good move and most Africans from independent states celebrated the self-rule status.

However, it soon turned out that the African leaders crafted ways to hang on to power with characteristics of dictatorship and president-for-life syndrome with single party regimes with selfish bureaucracies.[23] True to the above assertion, the African continent has had and indeed continued to witness a significant number of long-serving presidents and dictators. A case at hand is Equatorial Guinea's Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo[24] who came into power in 1979 and continued to rule until today. On the other hand, there is Paul Biya[25] who has ruled Cameroon for 40 years now. In fact, he became president of Cameroon in 1982. Uganda on the other hand has Yoweri Kaguta Museveni[26] who overthrew his predecessor Milton Obote in a military coup in 1986 while Idriss Déby has been controlling Chad as his own property for the last 32 years since he took realms of power in 1990.[27]

In surveying the situation of Africa and its socio-economic and political development, most countries which were or are still under dictatorial and autocratic regimes are under-developed socio-economically as compared to countries which have not experienced dictatorship at all. Such dictators and countries include Joseph-Désiré Mobutu,[28] who ruled Zaire (now the

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[21] Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1970).

[22] Collier, Paul. *Wars, guns and votes: Democracy in dangerous places*. Random House, 2011.

[23] A. Howard. Importance of human-centred leadership, http://www.humancentredleadership.com/media-1-1/2015/9/9/the-importance-of-human-centred-leadership (2015)

[24] Attiah, Karen (7 August 2012). "How an African Dictator Pays for Influence". *Huffington Post*.

[25] Milton H. Krieger and Joseph Takougang, *African State and Society in the 1990s: Cameroon's Political Crossroads* (2000), Westview Press, pages 65–74. See also John Mukum Mbaku, "Decolonization, Reunification and Federation in Cameroon", in *The Leadership Challenge in Africa: Cameroon Under Paul Biya* (2004), ed. John Mukum Mbaku and Joseph Takougang, page 34.

[26] Uganda, 1979–85: Leadership in Transition", Jimmy K. Tindigarukayo, *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 4. (December 1988), pp. 607–622. (JSTOR)

[27] F. Caselli, M. Morelli. Bad politicians, *Journal of Public Economics*, 88 (3–4) (2002), pp. 759-782

[28] Vieira, Daviel Lazure: Precolonial Imaginaries and Colonial Legacies in Mobutu's "Authentic" Zaire in: Exploitation and Misrule in Colonial and Postcolonial Africa, (edited by) Kalu, Kenneth and Falola, Toyin, pp. 165–191, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019

Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) from 1965 to 1997, El Hadj Omar Bongo[29], who took Gabon as president for 42 years; Gnassingbé Eyadéma in Togo for 38 years.[30] Up in the Northermn Aftrica was Muammar al-Gaddafi of Lybia between 1969 and 2011(for 42 years); Egypt also suffered under Hosni Mubarak[31] from 1981 to 2011; and Denis Sassou Nguesso[32] of Congo-Brazzaville who was in power from 1979 to 1992 and then from 1997 to present. Delving deeper to some few examples, it is evident that autocracy, dictatorship and president for life syndrome has contributed to the underdevelopment of various natrions across Africa. For example, in Zaire, Mobutu's kleptocracy and style of leadership enabled him to exploit the country's resources and billions of dollars for his personal use. He managed to buy luxurious buildings across Europe and held other offshore investment accounts. Several scholars argue that he ruled by decree and his word was supremo. He encouraged the citizens of Zaire to cheer and celebrate his deeds by composing songs and dances. Today, the country is ranked among the most poorest countries in the region with youth unemployment rates steadily on the rise resulting to endless violent conflict and internal civil wars and strife.[33]

In Gabon, for example, Omar Bongo's applied nepotism and favouritsm. Only his children (sons and daughters) and a few relatives occupied top government positions. He embezzled of Gabon's oil profits and other resources making him one of the richest people in the African continent. He ruled the country for 42 years and when he died, his son, Ali Bongo, inherited his presidency. The effect of this is that, rates of unemployment rose, crime and vandalism increased, dependency on foreign aid doubled as the poverty index among the people of Gabon increased. Elsewhere in Cameron, Paul Biya 'siphoned' all the natural resources leaving Cameroonians to suffer. He continued to disregard key constitutional provisions calling for respect for human rights, he practiced arbitrary arrests and detention without trial especially to opposition leaders and any other critic of his regime. He continued to consolidate power. His country was ranked by Transparency International as one of the most corrupt country in the 1999 rankings.

In Tunisia, underdevelopment is evident. Zine El Abidine Ben became an autocratic ruler and ruled from 1987 to 2011. He is said to have taken the realms of power in a bloodless *coup*, a few days (less than a month) after his appointment as the prime minister and ruled for 23 years when he stepped down due to a massive protests demanding his exit. He was sentenced to a life imprisonment the following year for his role in in the extrajudicial killings he sanctioned on the 2011 protestors, embezzlement oof public resources, corruption and human rights abuse.To date, Togo's Gnassingbé Eyadema is considered one of Africa's longest-serving dictator. He became Togo's president in 1967 after a military *coup* which he organized against the then incumbent President, whom he had earlier on assisted to come to power in a bloody military coup. When he died, his son took over as president. Under his regime, Togo became very poor. It is still ranked in the least developed countries list. It has continued to depend on foreign aid.

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[29] Gardinier, David E. (1997) "Gabon: Limited Reform and Regime Survival", in *Political Reform in Francophone Africa*, ed. John F. Clark and David E. Gardinier, Westview Press p. 147

[30] Nabourema, Farida (6 October 2020). "In Togo, There Is Nowhere to Hide". *New York TImes*.

[31] Hosni Mubarak (1928–2020): The rise and fall of Egypt's longest-ruling president". *Mada*. 25 February 2020..

[32] Kithinji, Brian, "Another win for President Nguesso ensures Congo's economic crisis will prolong". Mansa. 2020.

[33] Sandbrook, Richard (1985). *The Politics of Africa's Economic Stagnation*. Cambridge University Press.

In Malawi, the legacy of dictatorship and underdevelopment is evident. Hastings Kamuzu Banda wished to prolong his presidential term limits. He managed to. He became president of Malawi in 1963 and ruled up to the year 1994. He rose to become one of Africa's fierce dictator. His reign left Malawi as one of the World's poorest country. In Malawi, studies and government reports indicate that 1 in every 3 children under five are most likely to die of starvation and malnutrition. Kamuzu Banda also regularly tortured and murdered political opponents. Reports by Human Rights organizations show that during his reign, at least 6,000 people were killed, tortured and jailed without trial or any judicial procedures. Sudan also suffered dictatorship under President Gaafar Nimeiry. He ascended to power during the 1969 coup but later austed and ran into exile. Upon his return in the year 2000, he contested and was elected. He later died in 2009 and left behind a huge debt stemming from his indiscriminate borrowing leaving the Sudanese economy in ruins. He also imposed Islamic *sharia* law and doctrines leading to a more than 20 years of religious war between the Muslim of the North and the Christian population from the southern region.

Somalia on the other had suffered greatly under Siad Barre. Bare became president through a Coup d'état in 1969. He would later rule Somalia for over 20 years before he was sucessfully overthrown in 1991. He later, in 1995, died while exiled in Lagos Nigeria. His exit from Somalia geopolitics left this country without any form of central authority—resulting in an endless civil war. Consequently, this country became without a leader for over 20 years. General Siad Barre's regime, like many dictators in Africa, was marked by human right abuses, The UN Development program asserts "the regime of Siad Barre had one of the worst human rights records in Africa."

Elsewhere in Liberia, came Charles Taylor who was oftenly described as "tyrant of death". He became president in August 1997 and rulled ruthlessly until 2003 – a year when the international community mounted pressure on him forcing him to resign and run into exile in Nigeria. He is documented as one of the most brutal presidents of Africa. He was arrested and sentenced for 50 years by the Internationa Criminal Court (ICC) FOR CRIMES against humanity- that is; acts of terrorism, extrajudicial killingsmurder of innocent children, women and men and various economic crimes.

More interesting is the state of dictatorship in Gambia under, Yahya Jammeh who took power in a bloodless military coup in 1994 and defeated despite the fact that he had refused to accept the results. However, he was forced to concede defeat due to sustained external pressure by the African Union, ECOWAS, and UN. He left a very bad economy with high number of youth unemployment, human rights violations, poverty and poor infrastructure. In Angola, there is Jose Eduardo Dos Santos, who is currently the biological father to Isabel Dos Santos, Africa's richest woman. Eduardo is the second longest-serving president, after Equatorial Guinea's Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo. Edwardo is acused of massive corruption, nepotism, misuse of resources and diversion of public funds for personal gain, as well as accusations of human rights abuses. The World Bank report indicate 70% of the population of Angola lives on less than $2 aday wheras Dos Santos' family control Angola's oil deposits and other resources.

Zibambwe on the other hand had suffered dictatorship under Robert Gabriel Mugabe. Mugabe took power in 1980-first as a pime minister and then president in 1987. After thirty years in power, he got out of office following what seemed like a coup, smelled like a coup but was officially "not-a-coup."it is estimated, by the United Nations, that the unemployment

rates in Zimbabwe are abnormally high resulting to high levels of poverty, crime rate, migration to other countries like South Africa. Zimbabwe's currency value has also deteriorated beyond measure.

Colonial Autocracy and Underdevelopment: Roots of Human Rights Violations in Kenya

In Kenya, political repression has been experienced for long-stemming from colonial period. According to Koigi wa Wamwere,[34] the 1885 Berlin Conference in Germany was like a wedding ceremony by invite-only that resulted to division of a cake among the invitees. This is how Kenya found herself in the hands of the brutal Britons who instituted anti-african policies for their own selfish gain. This was the beginning of political repression and underdevelopment among the Africans. Therefore, for the proper occupation of the British in Kenya, the Europeans used strategic styles to subdue, conquer, and rule over the native populations.[35]

Mazrui[36] argues that for successful control and occupation of Kenya, the British colonial authorities in Kenya had to find a way to legalize land control and ownership, as it had no rights over natives' land. They therefore instituted and enacted a series of Crown land ordinances to formalize the alienation of the natives' land. These laws and ordinances led to alienation and appropriation of millions of acres of land that became white crown highlands. Indeed this was a scheme to exploit natives' free labor for the white man's capitalist economy.[37]

It is also argued that the colonial authorities employed use of mobile gallows to execute Mau Mau suspects then parade the corpses at market places as a warning lesson to others to note. This is well documented in the Human Right Wath's report published in 2010.[38] Repression became worse between 1952 and 1956 when a state of emergency was declared by Evaline Baring, the then colonial governor in Kenya. The declaration of this emergency made the Mau Mau seek refuge in the forests, where they planned guerrilla warfare against the British.[39] Massive arrests were made on the Mau Mau leaders and those captured were confined in barbed wire enclosures, then screened and later detained in concentration camps in various prisons across the country. Others were incarcerated, deported and killed. According to Elkins, more than 80,000 Africans were detained in concentration camps.

It is evident that repression, autocracy and dictatorship was introduced in Kenya by the colonial government. The style of bureaucratic and centralization of power, resources and political economy was a symptom of repression. It is therefore clear that the roots of autocracy begun here and inherited by African leaders who took over as rulers in their independent countries.

Autocracy, Extension of Term Limits and Repression, in Kenya, 1963-2002

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34 Wamwere, K. (2008). *Towards genocide in Kenya. The curse of negative ethnicity*. Nairobi, Kenya: Mvule.
35 See Mazrui, A. (2008). *Conflicts in Africa. An overview.* In A. Nhema & P. Zeleza (Eds.), *The roots of African conflicts: The causes and costs* (pp. 36-50). Athens, OH: Ohio University Press.
[36] Mazrui, A. (2008). *Conflicts in Africa. An overview.* In A. Nhema & P. Zeleza (Eds.), *The roots of African conflicts: The causes and costs* (pp. 36-50). Athens, OH: Ohio University Press.
[37] Southall, R. (2005). The Ndung'u report: Land & graft in Kenya. Review of African Political Economy, 103(1), 142-151.
[38] Human Rights Watch, 2010.

[39] Anderson, 2005.

Kenya's independence was finally attained in 1963 with Jomo Kenyatta first, as a prime minister then president. At independence, class division and the leaders of class-based organizations held greater power than they did only a few years later. When Jomo Kenyatta took power, the immediate step was to ensure that he achieved the social peace required for the new government to maintain the economic growth necessary to fuel development plans. Stratification within the Kikuyu community had produced the Mau Mau rebellion, a revolt of the Kikuyu *ahoi*, or landless squatters, against both white settlers, who had expropriated land, and many of the chiefs, especially in Kiambu, who also controlled access rights to agricultural plots.[40]

By the late 1980s, Africans joined the international communities in the clamour and wind of change for democracy - a new dawn that was already ringing across Eastern Europe and the rest of the world. While popular unrest across had long been an intermittent feature of African politics and democracy, the collapse of the Berlin wall influenced mass protestations challenging the incumbent leaders as never before. At this time, post-independence patriotic Kenyans too took to the streets in major cities to express their displeasure with the poor state of politics and economy which was fully characterized by repression, human rights violations and political suppression.

By early late 1980s and early 1990s, many courageous lawyers and activists who were critical of the Moi regimes were harassed and jailed. Others fled into exile, as others were assassinated. In 1982, the constitution was amended to make KANU the only legal political party wile criminalizing other political parties and movements. No assemblies were allowed across the country. In 1987, the constitution was amended again to give Moi the power to fire and hire senior judges, magistrates, and civil servants. His quest for the constitutional amendment were repealed in the 1990s, but the executive branch continued to autocratically control all other two branches of the government-the judiciary and the legislature through a system of patronage and threats.

Moi, throughout his tenure as president, rewarded certain individuals with government posts, employment opportunities in parastatals, as well as allocating them large tracts of land and other opportunities. This patronage continued to undermine the economy and the rule of law. In a country which is highly ethnic, Moi seems to favour his Kalenjin community at the expense of other forty two tribes. This led to ethnic polarization. While much of Kenya's worst repression seems to be part of its past, corruption has helped to sustain a culture where injustice is often tolerated and protection for human rights is weak. It was not until the end of the 1980s and the collapse of the Berlin Wall that foreign donors began to take a greater interest in democracy in Kenya and started funding local human rights and pro-democracy groups. There are now many such groups in Kenya; they monitor abuses, hold press conferences, and maintain an uneasy relationship with the government.

More often, detentions and political trails, torture of innocent Kenyans, arbitrary arrests and police brutality like that which was experienced during the colonial period became a common practice during Moi's tenure. He perceived human rights generally as alien and Eurocentric conceptions inconsistent with African values and norms and socio-cultural modus operandi. This is the guiding principle which has consistently influenced Moi's behavioural patterns internally *vis-a-vis* pro-democracy and human rights movement. He views the pro-democracy and human rights advocates in Kenya as unpatriotic, disloyal, and ungrateful

[40] See esp. David Throup, "The Construction and Deconstruction of the Kenyatta State," in *The Political Economy of Kenya* , ed. Michael Schatzberg (Praeger: New York, 1987), and Henry Bienen, *Kenya: The Politics of Participation and Control* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974).

individuals influenced by what he called 'foreign masters'.[41] After 20 years of independence, there were several torture buildings and chambers erected by Moi regime in several parts of the country. The popular one is *Nyayo House*.[42]for instance, Nyayo House was opened officially in December 1983to serve as a centre for love, peace and unity. However, this was ironical as later this building was converted into a chamber tourture. Its architectural design was changed to make it suitable for tourturing.[43] Especially the outlawed group called *Mwakenya*.[44]

The torture chambers belonged to the Special Branch and were located in the basement of Nyayo House. Over the next eight years, up to two thousand Kenyans underwent interrogation and torture in the fourteen cells. 'Nowhere does Moi's lack of presidential vision showed as the choice of Nyayo House for housing the torture chambers,' remarked the Presbyterian cleric Timothy Njoya later. 'Nyayo House could have been a fitting monument to the President's philosophy of peace, love and unity. Instead, the building stands condemned for the grotesque activities that make it qualify as "Restricted Area". Nyayo House completely desecrated the legacy of Moi's vision and stood as a frightening epitaph of his Presidency.[45]

According to Ogot, those tortured at Nyayo House were victims of what Kenya's 'decade of extreme political repression'.[46] In the wake of the *coup*, Moi's critics and opponents of the regime were arrested arbitrarily and subjected to torture and imprisonment. Moreover, they were followed by the state security forces without regard of their privacies and became more invasive as they sought out the roots of discontent within society at large. Ordinary citizens also found themselves the targeted by the state repression. This made Moi's government very unpopular. [47] A "third wave" of democratization of Africa in the early 1990s begun to bring the most significant political change in the continent. Consequently, significant political liberalisation led to the emergence of opposition parties, a free media, independent trade unions and a several civic organizations.[48]

The KANU government continued to use force to oppress the opposition in the late 1990s, even after the incorporation of the IPPG amendments to the Constitution. Peaceful rallies calling for political and constitutional reforms were persistently violently broken up by the security forces. On June 10, 1999, the police, complemented by a squad of "KANU youth" and the infamous *Jeshi la Mzee* (which in Swahili literally means, old man's militia), violently disrupted a peaceful rally organized by religious and civil society groups to protest the

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[41] See, Adar, K. G., 'Human Rights and Academic Freedom in Kenya's Public Universities: The Case of the Universities Academic Staff Union'. *Human Rights Quarterly*. 21(1) (February 1999): 187.

[42] CIA, Defense Intelligence Agency and Bureau of Intelligence and Research, State Department, 'Kenya: Prospects for stability', November 1982, 1; CREST, NACP

[43] BBC Monitoring, 'President Moi's inaugural speech', 14 October 1978; TNA: PRO FCO 31/2324.

[44] Mwakenya, Draft Minimum Programme: September 1987, Nairobi, 1987, p. 7; papers of the Committee for the Release of Political Prisoners in Kenya, George Padmore Institute, London (CRPPK, GPI).

[45] Moi is guilty of misrule', Finance, 16–31 December 1991.

[46] Ogot, Who, if Anyone, p. 121

[47] See, Solomon, J. A., Falling the Democratic Challenge: Freedom of Expression in Multi-Party Kenya-1993. Washington, D. C.: The Robert F. Kennedy Memorial Center for Human Rights, 1993

[48] Africa's wave of democratization is explored in Michael Bratton and Nicolas van de Walle. *Democratic Experiments in Africa*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997). In addition to these states, of course, Botswana, Gambia, Mauritius and Zimbabwe have conducted regular multi-party elections since their independence, and Senegal since 1979. Gambian democracy suffered a considerable setback, however, when a military coup took power in 1994

government's handling of the constitutional review process. A number of people, including the Reverend Timothy Njoya who has been vocal in criticizing the government, were seriously injured. The *Jeshi la Mzee*, allegedly sponsored by the Assistant Minister in the Office of the President, Fred Gumo, again appeared on the scene in May 1997 and was used to violently disrupt pro-reform rallies. Notwithstanding the elections, government was complicit to violence against its citizens who were exercising their rights of association and expression.

Moi's regime of centralisation and personalisation of power led to the sabotage of the functions of the judiciary and the legislature. As was the situation during the *de jure* one party state rule, violations of human rights by Moi's regime continued even after the 1992 and 1997 multiparty general elections. Indeed, Moi persistently demonstrated rigidity and unwillingness to protect, uphold and observe the sanctity of human rights.

Conclusion

Politics of autocracy, dictatorship, bureaucracy and the syndrome of president-for-life has prevailed in several countries across Africa. This has contributed to underdevelopment in the said countries leading to high unemployment, crime, civil strife, violation of human rights and overdependence on foreign aid. Further, it creates class in the African societies such that the gap between the haves and haves not is wide. This is especially true when those in power use their influence to amass resources for their own gain at the expense of the poor majority. In the case of Kenya, and indeed several other African countries, the acts of repression, human rights violations, dictatorship and autocracy as practiced by African leaders seem to have been inherited from the colonial regime. For example, Kenyatta and Moi seem to have inherited the practice of torture and detention of their critics from the colonial government which had established concentration camps for hardcore criminals.

This paper therefore concludes that acts of repression and violation of human rights have a direct relationship to underdevelopment. Presidents and leaders who have practiced autocracy and dictatorship have seen their countries lag behind in terms of development. This has delayed a serious take off in terms of development.

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