

Political Regimes, Contentious National Identity Question, and Nation-Building in African Countries: The Kenyan Case (1963 – 2020)

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ABSTRACT

Kenya's successive political regimes' contentiousness, like elsewhere in Africa, breeds the dearth of national identity, notwithstanding national identity's relevance in characterising countries' politico-economic and socio-cultural landscapes. National identity accelerates nation-building, hence, its inevitability for African countries; given their irrefutable need for statehoods. Arguably, the dearth of national identity constructs gratuitous upheavals as illustrated by post-election violence and contestations, in Kenya 2007, Ivory Coast 2010-2011, Cameroon 2018-2019, Nigeria 2018, Guinea Bissau 2020, etcetera. While seeking to divulge how Kenya's national identity could emerge with its 4th President in 2017; this paper argues that, in African countries, the dearth of national identities propels political and economic failures, destroys citizens' senses of belonging, undermines nation-building and enhances national disunity. Irked by these peccadilloes, fashioned by African leaders' self-centredness; this work grounds on the elite theory to conclude that, leaders of African political regimes generate national identities' dearth and their countries' disunity and underdevelopment.

Keywords: Political-Regimes, National-Identity, Nation-Building, Self-Determination, Statehood.

INTRODUCTION

The Research Problem and Theoretical Foundation

It is commonplace, though aberrant to characterise African countries' politico-economic and socio-cultural landscapes as tribal or ethnic divides, rather than as humanly united entities, having specific national identities, for nation-building and ultimately, statehoods. Indeed, the successive African political regimes' contentiousness, to characterise national identity as inferior to tribalism or ethnicity in terms of nation and state-building must become distasteful and jettisoned.

However, as Connor (2011) observes, "...most scholars associated with theories of national-identity, nation-building and statehood tend to regard tribal and ethnic identities as permanent necessities, which must replace national identities in terms of nation-building in African countries; consequently, these scholars imbue undue importance to tribalism and ethnicity amongst Africans." Contrarily, tribal and ethnic divides, should be perceived as ephemeral nuisances, which

unquestionably should give way to national identities, because national identities unite countries' citizens, regardless of their tribal or ethnic diversities.

As Nnoli (1978) asserts, "...tribalism or ethnicity, blurs, thwarts and dwarfs nation-building goals, thereby rebuffing the concept of national identity; whereas, national identity is the foundation for harnessing a country's unity towards statehood." Arguably thus, one major setback in Africa's post-colonial political development has been the absence of domineering political wills for creating national identities in African countries. Indeed, Africans' lack national identities to the extent that, someone cannot self-identify as an African with pride and self-confidence, irrespective of one's country. Or, can someone identify oneself as Nigerian, Kenyan, Gabonese, Algerian, Mauritanian, Namibian, Cameroonian or Senegalese, with unwavering self-confidence, regardless of one's tribal or ethnic origin. Herein lays this study's research problem, which is rooted in the public policy-making domain of policy advocacy; aimed at creating constructive and irreversible national identities in African countries.

As Nnoli (1978:5) observes, "The history of the national identity question in Africa dates to the period of colonisers' illegitimacy, which constructed the myth of the interior 'natives' as an instrument of domination." As Mamdani (1996) supports, "This myth therefore, lays the theoretical foundation for identifying oneself as, 'I am a native of this or that tribe, ethnicity or country;' rather than, "I am an African, with the specificity of country; and if need be, of tribal or ethnic origin, featuring as a last resort." As Mamdani (1996:135), asserts, quoting late Mozambican President Samora Michel, "...for Mozambique to live as a country, ethnicity must die." Nevertheless, Africans have regressively lived in these ethnically inclined mentalities, which largely contribute to propelling widespread conflicts, anarchy, instability and permeating continental underdevelopment. "Tribalism or ethnicity are theoretically founded on the basis of narrow-minded social phenomena, associated with the interactions among members of different tribal or ethnic groups, which represent social formations distinguished by their communal and obvious transient cultural boundaries" Nnoli (1978:7) reiterates.

In furthering tribalism or ethnicity, the dominant mutual factor may be language, as the extension of culture. Thus, language is clearly the most prominent variable that distinguishes tribal or ethnic origins. Hence, Achebe (1958) posits, "A kins man in trouble must not be blamed, but be saved." Implying that, should an Igbo-language speaking person (Igbo is a Nigerian ethnic group), finds another Igbo-speaker in trouble, the person in trouble must be saved before being queried for being in trouble. Accordingly, Achebe's injunction highlights the deep rooted tribal and ethnic affinity, passion and fraternity amongst social groups in Nigeria, like elsewhere in Africa. Certainly, social groups are not necessarily homogeneous entities, even linguistically or culturally; because, minor linguistic and cultural differences still exist within them, forming as they do; the basis for the delineation of sub-ethnic (tribe, clan) systems; and creating as they do, unbridled and inordinate competitions for economic, cultural and political resources. Thus, the concept of 'ethnic group' has a greater explanatory power over 'tribal group' in terms of alienating the broader concept of national identity.

According to Ikejiani (2007), "Ethnologically, a tribe is a small unit of people enmeshed in a kinship network and organised for narrower collective actions. But, ethnicity appears scientifically broader, because, it is unlimited in space, since it acts as a higher theoretical and empirical construct, whose

characteristics can be more objectively determined.” Regrettably, even as these concepts must be loathed products of socialisation into the colonialists’ exploitative schemes, Africans have consciously and myopically internalised their discriminatory classifications and attributes against their countrymen and landscapes, at the detriment of building cohesive and prosperous African countries.

Several factors account for the emergence of this ethnic consciousness, namely: (i) Colonialists’ racism, used against Africans to control who gets what, how and why of the scarce local resources; (ii) Inter-tribal/ethnic competition prompted by debilitating living conditions, which persist phenomenally in African societies; and (iii) Africans’ search for colonialists’ crumbs and largesse for employability into the public or private sectors. Paradoxically, this consciousness accounts for the loss of the superior notion of national identity; as well as rendering conflicts inevitable through inter-ethnic rivalries over tangible or intangible resources. Particularly, this unhealthy practice thrives in societies, (mostly Africans’), where inequality is accepted as normal, with individual wealth esteemed over the common good (Young, 2004, Zolberg, 2019).

As Zolberg, (2019:17) observes, “...with this persistent dearth of national identities in African countries, peace and stability is elusive, as conflicts’ inclinations, bequeathed by the continent’s colonial ties, continue to devastate Africa’s landscapes.” Nonetheless, Kenya, had until recently appeared to have enjoyed relative calm, thereby prompting Kenya’s tag as ‘a peace-loving and stability-prone country, a role model in a continent characterised by conflicts, coup d’états, ethnic violence, all of which hamper political, social and economic growth.” Thus, Kenya’s relative peace and stability were deeply shaken by the 2007 post-election violence, and subsequent human rights violations, characterised by widespread extra judicial killings (Nsenga 2016, Anafi 2017).

As Anafi (2017:47) notes, “...today, there are failures of national cohesion in several African countries given the dearth of national identities.” Accordingly, this work arises to scientifically trace why Kenya, hitherto hailed as a role model in Africa’s politico-economic and social landscapes, was instantly plunged into such devastating loss of human and material lives. Moreso, the insufficient and deceptive literature arising from Kenya’s 2007 post-electoral narratives, and the overall quest for national identities, necessitate this study. While this paper’s subterranean academic pursuit includes determining the roles of Kenya’s successive political regimes in abetting Kenya’s national identity’s dearth; it further seeks to demonstrate the inevitability of national identities for Africa’s post-colonial states. To clarify these worries, the study identifies the nation, nation-state and state, as three key concepts associated to constructing national identities in human societies.

Nation, Nation-State, State and the National Identity in Africa: An Overview

For Hobsbawn (1983), “...the nation was one of many traditions invented by political elites in order to legitimise their individual power bases during revolutionary or democratisation periods; although that invention remains largely fictitious.” Accordingly, “... a nation is an invented tradition, which emerged from the upheavals triggered by modernity or development with inordinate human ambitions.” So, the nation emerged through a personality cult, using a group of people identified not only by their cultural homogeneity, but also by common social, economic and political calamities. This culminated into creating a unified community of people to co-habit, even in uneasy oneness. A nation-state is a heterogeneous conglomeration of human beings in which its citizens consciously operate different cultures. However, the nation-state is an ideal community, in which cultural

boundaries, although divergent, match up with political ones. According to Hastings (1997), "...a nation-state is a sovereign state, with most of its subjects united by factors, which define its membership, such as political aspirations rather than just language or common descent." This view of the nation-state represents the backbone for creating a national identity. As Nnoli (1978:27) posits, "...in a settled human community, peoples' aspirations become obtaining decent livelihoods in oneness, propelled by upright governance, which enhances national cohesion irrespective of the obvious diversities."

The state, (despite its numerous ideological perspectives, prompting its lack of definitional consensus amongst political scientists), refers to a set of different, but inter-related and often overlapping, theories about a range of political phenomena. In one thought, "...it is a committee of the ruling class, so arranged to protect the interests of the rulers over those of the ruled" (Nnoli 1978:185). In this sense, a state can hardly forge a national identity, given the conflictual disparities, created through undemocratic social, economic and political structures of class intrigues. This notion of the state appears to dominate most of modern Africa, hence the incessant contestations for political, economic and social spaces, between the underprivileged masses and the privileged few who rule.

Still, "the state is a society of people politically organised within a definite territory, a population, government and coercive powers to enforce obedience – sovereignty" (Hastings 1997:17). Again, "the state is a community of persons, more or less numerous, permanently occupying a defined territory, independent (or nearly so) of external control and possessing an organised government to which the greater body of inhabitants render habitual obedience" (Henry 1995). These perspectives of the state are important, because, they account for its status in international relations, arising from the 1648 Westphalian Peace Treaty, which institutionalised the current states system. Basically, be it a nation, nation-state or state, the erection of a national identity must revolve around ensconcing good governance.

Hence, "...in developed countries, good governance has crushed the dearth of national identities; to the extent that, a citizen thereto can say, I am French, German, Romanian, American or Russian, etcetera; with pride and unwavering individual confidence" (Nnoli, 1978:201). But, with the incessant agitations for national break-ups, which dominate most of Africa's political and social landscapes: Senegal, Nigeria, Cameroon, and Libya, etcetera; it is plausible asserting that, good governance typified by trustworthy democratic institutions is sine qua non for shaping national identities, creating nation-building and statehoods.

The Theoretical Framework: Elitism, Nation-Building and National Identity Question in Africa

The academic orientation for this study gyrates around the elite theory, "...conceived by Vilfredo Pareto (1848–1923), Gaetano Mosca (1858–1941), and Robert Michels (1876–1936), in the social sciences and humanities to describe the character of power relations in societies, as being skewed in favour of the few who rule; over the many who are ruled" (Derbie 2011). The theory assumes that, "...a small minority, consisting of members of a society, holds and controls extensive knowledge, economic and political power in policymaking, strategic planning networks – think-tanks and financial foundations. This minority uses this power to govern societies, and impose their preferences unto the entire society" (Husametin & Feyzullah 2013). Consequently, in African, this

power is independent of any democratic and security aspirations of the masses, since the masses are supposedly unknowledgeable, and must not be involved in using such power, except in votes casting, and must be excluded in fashioning national identities, especially by the non-involvement in policymaking or any apparatus of public opinion or representativeness.

However, the misleading assumptions of this theory are that, power and knowledge of society are not necessarily concentrated in the hands of a few. As Nnoli (1978:48) posits, "...although these powerful and knowledgeable elites are unified; over the masses, who are supposedly diverse, powerless and unknowledgeable, these masses still possess the power of sovereignty in society, as the cases of Blaise Compaore in Burkina Faso, Ferdinand Marcos in the Philippines, etcetera illustrate." Certainly, the elites' aggregate their interests and preferences to appear consensual given their common backgrounds and positions, which define their power characteristics in various institutions (Nnoli 1978:89).

Thus, in direct affront to democratic norms, the elite theory opposes pluralism, a tradition that assumes that all individuals or at least the multitude of social groups, have equal power and balance out each other; in contributing to democratic outcomes which represent the emergent aggregate will of society. So, elitism assumes that, by allowing the forging of national identity, their power bases would be eroded by the masses' understanding of power structures and complexities. Consequently, elites' preferences must devastate the presence of national identities in African countries.

THE IMPACT OF ELITISM ON NATIONAL IDENTITY AND NATION-BUILDING IN AFRICAN COUNTRIES

In Africa, elitism discourages national identity because national identity promotes people's senses of belonging and awareness of their country; while opening their cognitiveness, which could challenge elitism's claims to knowledge and power over the masses. National identity is not a trait with which people are born; rather, the experiences from the common way-stations of people's lives build their sense of national identity. Viewed positively, national identity is typically called national patriotism, but viewed negatively, it is sometimes known as chauvinism. Elitism negatively impacts on the concepts national identity and nation-building, due to the impulsion of the state capture syndrome, orchestrated by elites. Thus, nation-building is usually captured by elitism to dwarf masses' preferences in African countries. As Bandyopadhyaya & Green (2008) note, "...spearheaded by the elites, nation-building suffers ineffable setbacks in Africa, although it constitutes the core for projects and programmes, whose dysfunctionality and instability are fashioned by poor governance. Nation-building implies the development of governmental infrastructures and civil societies for increasing a country's comprehensive multi-dimensional growth."

Thus, it is important to look at the evolution of theories of nation-building in the literature; since several people believe that nation-building is evolutionary rather than revolutionary; that is time-taking in social processes that cannot be jump-started from the outside. For instance, the evolution of European city-states into nations – Italian, German, French city-states into the Zollverein customs union and later nations, and the development of China from the warring kingdoms, took a long time, resulting from not only of political leadership, but of changes in technology and economic processes (the industrial and then the agricultural revolutions), as well as communication, culture, civil societies and many other factors (Nnoli, 1978:70, Lipset, 1979:34).

As Lipset (1979:36) asserts, "...historically, thirteen colonies with diverse origins, came together to form a new state – the United States of America. That state, like many others in contemporary times, faced the prospects of disintegration in 1865, and it took another 100 years for the integration of whites and blacks, North and South, East and West." This was a new type of nation-state, because its people were not culturally homogenous, as it had been thought to be the case in the earlier definition of the concept of nation-state. Although with its heterogeneity, the USA conscientiously formed a national identity. Nonetheless, nation-building by one nation, may destroy other nations. For example, in building the United States; aboriginal nation-states were erased or marginalised. The Six-Nations Confederacy of the Iroquois had existed before the American state. Today many nations are in the processes of nation-building, and re-building their social, cultural, economic and political foundations for what is left of, after achieving self-rule.

Thus, first nations seek to re-build cultural identities as nations in order to challenge their disintegration by others in the creation of their own states as illustrated by the United States. As Dahl and Stinebrickner (2003), opine,

"Empirically, nation-building embeds in the processes of a country's construction and restructuring of a national identity, using soft or hard power of the state." In democracies, this involves the collective and inclusive persuasions and upward movement and deployment of internal or external human and material resources, to attract good governance, citizens' progress, prosperity and happiness, with diverse opportunities for providing fulfilling livelihoods in a country." But in dictatorship, it involves, using police-state style of governance, usually spearheaded by forcing citizens' obedience to the ruler's preferences – the political correctness syndrome."

Nation-building might also involve the usage of unending propaganda as in dictatorships – North Korea, or enduring politics of inclusiveness with the implanting of extensive socio-economic and politics-cultural infrastructure as in democracies – the US, to create unpopular or popular harmonies among the citizenry, irrespective of their ethnic origins," Dahl and Stinebrickner (2003:62).

To Bayart (1973) "...nation-building does not involve using state capture governance syndrome to acquire popular support, incarnated by the politics of 'political correctness' which forces citizens to offer loyalty to the ruler, rather than to the fatherland; nor does it involve politics and economics of exclusiveness, intimidations/enticements into political offices nominations and public contracts' offers; or the use of draconian state-type legislatures and governance to coerce citizens into morbid dominant rather vibrant multi-parties politics." Accordingly, nation-building involves the inculcation of values, which allow every citizen freedom to choose, act, associate, belong and believe in constructive and structurally opposing views on subjects of national interest, which help to promote citizens' happiness and senses of oneness.

Such opposing views must be distanced from what the language of 'political correctness' propagates and foists into society by political leaders of most African countries. Nation-building as (Thomas Paine, 1737 – 1809) opines, "...is part of a moment in a man's times, especially the selfless ruler's, when the trial of his soul is tested in governing a state's diversities." Thus, the growth of behaviours, values, language, institutions, and physical structures that elucidate histories and cultures, directly

concretise and perfect the present and insure the future identity and independence of a country to form an unwavering national identity.

NATIONAL IDENTITY AND TYPES OF NATION-BUILDING: A CORRELATIONAL ANALYSIS

Therefore, a national identity would easily emerge through the characteristics of; rather than types of nation-building. Theoretically, it appears realistic subscribing to types of public policies that characterise nation-building, than to classifying types of nation-building. However, this author aligns with Bandyopadhyay & Green (2008:16), who rather make a correlation between types of public policies that characterise nation-building, than naming types of nation-building per se. Consequently, in most African countries, nation-building was essentially epitomised by policy phrases in which public policy thinking revolved around 'national integration,' which was seen as one of the most efficient and best approach for building the fragile post-colonial African state. Thus, "...national integration, rather than national unity, remained the most permeating topic, among academics and policymakers in post-independent Africa, despite national integration's cajoling and misleading insinuations," (Bayart 1973:183). As Bandyopadhyay & Green (2008:16) add,

"One striking fact in characterising different types of nation-building is by looking at policies, with variation in their implementation across Africa. While countries like Guinea-Bissau, Rwanda and Togo implemented only one policy each since independence, both Nigeria and Uganda implemented nine nation-building policies.

Strong variations even exist between the two African countries with no experience in colonialism. Liberia for instance, never realised any nation-building policies, while Ethiopia executed seven since 1940."

Accordingly, Bandyopadhyay & Green (2008:46) identifies five reasons for this situation. First, it is "...the ethnic diversity, which had long been seen as an impediment to nation-building. Thus, we should expect to see a negative correlation between ethnic diversity at independence and subsequent nation-building policies." Second, it is that, "African nation-states had many historical hitches, extending their power across space, especially in the colonial and post-colonial periods. Larger states potentially needed more appropriate nation-building policies to achieve their goal of national integration, which led to expect the state's size to be positively correlated with nation-building policies." Third, it is, the expectation that, states with greater capacity to implement more nation-building policies in terms of imbuing democratic culture are likely to instil national identities.

African states with higher proportions of ethnic groups with a post-colonial history of centralised government have inferior post-colonial public utilities provisions. Fourth, inasmuch as states at higher levels of development might not need to implement as many nation-building policies due to the political stability provided by higher incomes, we would expect to see a negative relationship between GDP/capita at independence and subsequent nation-building policies. Fifth, we would also expect to see variation according to the character of the colonial political power structures, with post-colonial differences in political and economic development between former British and French colonies in Africa. With the adoption of the CFA francs by ex-French African colonies, these differences augmented. Accordingly, Bandyopadhyay & Green (2008:49) project an interesting schema showing variations in Africans' nation-building policies.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Nation-Building Policy Variables.

Variables	Observations (Obs.)	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (Std. Dev.)
Collection of Ethnic Groups	1593	0.1080	0.3486
State Change of Name	1593	0.0069	0.0828
Capital Name or Location	1593	0.0063	0.0790
Currency	1593	0.0100	0.0997
Centralization	1593	0.0056	0.0750
Religion or Language	1593	0.0038	0.0613
Non-ethnic Census	1593	0.0232	0.1507
One Party 1	1593	0.0289	0.1675
Land Nationalization 1	1593	0.0094	0.0966
Conscription 1	1593	0.0138	0.1167
One Party 2	1663	0.6055	0.4889
Land Nationalization 2	1681	0.2641	0.4410
Conscription 2	1721	0.3457	0.4757

Source: Bandyopadhyay & Green (2008) "Nation-Building and Conflict in Modern Africa," London: The Suntory Centre, London School of Economics and Political Science, p. 12, in Roeder, P. (2001). Ethno-linguistic Fractionalisation (ELF) Indices, 1961 and 1985. <http://weber.ucsd.edu/~proeder/elf.htm>.

If a country undergoes military, cultural or economic threats, or when it becomes part of a foreign empire, its national identity tends to become stronger. For instance, Poland, which was divided between Prussia (now Germany), Austria and Russia between 1795 and 1918, illustrates. Though Poland no longer existed as an independent state, the people retained a strong sense of national identity, just like Taiwan. Taiwanese identity became stronger after the fall of the Republic of China to the Communist government, then became stronger still after Communist China began to threaten Taiwan with military might and rhetoric. National identity ingredients include good governance, national colours, national symbols, national anthem, shared history, culture, cuisine, music, and strong senses of belonging.

Political Regimes, National Identity and Nation-Building in Africa - Kenyan (1963 -2020)

As Westen (2008) observes, "Kenya is among the few African countries that, for a lengthy period after independence, kept a reputation for uninterrupted peace." This is praiseworthy, given that Kenya has had its fair share of turbulent times before independence. But its successive political regimes, starting with Jomo Kenyatta (1963-78), who wrestled out state power from the colonialists failed to galvanise Kenyans towards a national identity, but rather Kenyatta perfected ethnic divides. "As emergent elite, his preferences were ethnic politics; overrated with patronages, rent-seeking and prebendalism at the detriment of the nation-building in Kenya as he muzzled the nascent Kenyan democracy into dictatorship, a few years after independence; orchestrating as he did, sporadic political killings that characterised the single-party period" (Westen 2008:12) notes.

Haven laid a system of violence as an alternative to the marketplace of free ideas, which subsequently led to ethnic clashes, following Kenya's return to multiparty politics in the early 1990s, Kenyatta's regime erased the idea of national identity (Westen 2008:14). On the verge of Kenya's independence, it was a sense of nationalism, not ethnic aggrandisement that guided the

choices made by nationalists. For instance, "...in 1961, Oginga Odinga and other nationalists refused to enter into any independence negotiations with British colonialists until Jomo Kenyatta was released from detention," (Westen 2008:112). The reasoning was that, to enter into independence negotiations, while Kenyatta and others were in detention symbolised betraying the collective nascent sense of national identity that supposedly bonded all freedom fighters irrespective of their ethnic origins. However, after independence in 1963, the leading political parties, the Kenya African National Union (KANU) and the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU), became amalgams of ethnicity. Thus, "... as Kenyatta had destroyed the emerging national identity, he used ethnic cabals to consolidate power at the presidency; while marginalising his erstwhile liberation colleagues," (Westen 2008:119).

Similarly, "Kenyatta worked with a clique of ethnically inclined politicians to interfere with the doctrine of separation of powers, by emasculating the judiciary and legislature and creating an imperial presidency", (Throup & Hornsby 1998:17). Blatantly, most of the politicians who wielded political and economic power during Kenyatta's and subsequent regimes hail from his Kikuyu ethnic group, thus, it was easy for Kenyatta to modify the national constitution in pursuit of unbridled power. According to Oyugi (2007), "...between 1963 and 1978 the constitution was amended numerous times, even as this character of politics, blurred the emergence of national identity, it continued into Moi, Kibaki and even Uhuru's political regimes till date in 2020 and perhaps beyond."

Symbols of National Identity as Concrete Factors for Unification

As Benjamin Disraeli (1804 – 1881) argued, "Individuals may form communities for the purposes of shared interests' aggregation, which may not defy the overall senses of public inclusion. In this sense, it is the positive character of national institutions as symbols of identity that creates a nation." Thus, these institutions must be embedded into the political system to represent the nation's main signposts. He adds, "Defining a nation only by its borders, its system of government, and its methods of sustenance and production is limited, if it ignores the presence of a nation's symbols, rituals and traditions." These elements comprise and strengthen a nation's identity, and its image projected by national leaders. National symbols including national anthems, flags and coats of arms are the strongest inorganic instruments of national identity. Basically, they symbolise special relationship with their nations, differentiating them from one another; while reaffirming their identical boundaries.

"National leaders have to accept and vigorously promote these symbols, - the national flags, anthems, coat of arms, monuments; national relics - figures of national heroes, using them to create bonds, motivate patriotism, as these honour past citizens' efforts, and legitimatise formal national authority" (Cerulo, 1993:243-271).

Nonetheless, in Africa, the purpose which flags serve depends on the character (autocratic or democratic) of the political system and its leadership. Herein, national symbols do not have the weight of conveying messages that are purposively and carefully developed by statesmen who will consciously select their constituting elements. As illustration, "...the American flag was carefully made by revolutionary leaders as a graphic demonstration of a new political entity, which constituted the new found freedoms and liberty, equality of man and the superiority of God" (Cerulo (1993:243-271). The flag shapes structures of the governed, states and stripes representing the unity of these unique states, thereby fashioning an American national identity.

National symbols can be analysed in two main ways: (i) Content (colours, emblems, lyrics, and tempo) which represent semantic analysis of symbols. By analysing the components of a symbol one would be able to understand their meaning, for example red symbolised bloodshed, green representing hard work and productivity of the land, and the lyrics' explaining the meaning of the culture of the nation. Semantic analysis thus explains the sense of each element. (ii) Method, which is the syntactic analysis, focusing on the design of a symbol, such as colours and emblems arrangements, the number of elements contained in the flag. Basically, syntactic analysis explains the meaning expressed by a symbol's structure and the relationship between its various parts. Therefore, syntactic configuration organises a symbol's elements, while the elements of two symbols may be identical, the method of combining or repeating those elements can change the meaning of the symbol. A good case is the 1789 French revolution when leaders changed the French flag from blue-red-white to blue-white-red. By changing the syntactic structure, the flag's message was changed. This work may not delve deep into measuring syntactic or semantic aspects of symbols but how they create a national identity, as perceived by a country's citizens and their indigenous aspirations.

PAN AFRICANISM AS AN IDEOLOGY FOR NATIONAL IDENTITY

According to Ake, (1965), "Like Nkrumah thought of Pan-Africanism, I am not an African because I was born in Africa, but, because Africa was born in me." The Pan African Movement arose in the emotional atmosphere of complete alienation, physical and psychological exploitation and spiritual torment radiated by colonialism. As Wallerstein (1976) opines, "When Henry Sylvester-Williams of Trinidad convened a Pan-African conference in 1900, he did this largely to mobilise solidarity for Africans threatened in various ways by colonisers' the continent." The idea grew to become a movement for various Pan-African congresses, imagining the unity of all Africans. It is vital noting that these congresses shared almost similar themes, such as: "'Liberation from Western Imperialism';

'Africa's Growth and Unity'; and 'Peace among Africans' ", (Wallerstein 1976:1). Consequently, Africans must revert to Sylvester-Williams and Nkrumah's genuine thought to create an African national identity.

Du Bois, (1994) citing from Sylvester-Williams, demonstrates the concept of double consciousness as experienced by those who are of African descent living abroad, as he states, "It is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his two-ness, two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength keep it from being torn asunder." For the purpose of this study, the concept of double consciousness implies to all black people living in Africa or not.

As Du Bois stresses, "...one can truly 'belong' only if he or she sees a reflection of him or her in the people around. On the contrary, one experiences a feeling of 'unbelonging' if he or she has no reflection of himself in anyone else in their environment." As Edwards (2003:32) posits, "Belonging to a locality is comparable to belonging, for instance, to a particular family or a particular past. It is through the expression of an inclination either to belong or not to belong to those places and their significant social relationships, which becomes conceptualised."

As Nnoli (1978:42) contends, “...the repressive nature of African governments at the dawn of independence disarrayed any lofty notion of Pan-Africanism, because in a couched bid to foster consciousness of oneness, African leaders suppressed opposing political parties or individuals who tried to build other views in the cause of nation-building. At the regional level, the leaders tended to come up with African programmes that isolated them from the outsiders.” Thus, Pan-Africanism influenced the adoption of policies that encouraged political independence through two ways: (i) the ‘Africanisation’ of influential businesses, and (ii) the abolition of most powerful political positions hitherto reserved for whites even after colonialism.

For example, Ghana and Nigeria abolished the imperial prerogatives; as well as the jurisdiction from such councils from Britain; and as Pan-Africanism succeeded in some aspects and quarters, it failed in other aspects and quarters” (Nnoli, 1978:76). But, “...economically, a few radical changes were instituted to transform traditional agrarian societies into modern ones, through the adoption of new technologies. However, this transformation failed to respect one aspect of economic growth, which is the construction of consumption velocity that corresponded or transcended the degree of productivity. Politically, Pan-Africanism attempted to reinforce Africans’ togetherness by exposing them more to one another while stressing the essential divergence of Africans and their problems.

Accordingly, Nnoli (1978:77) remarks, “Pan-Africanism reinforced this point by its contours which accommodated minority groups, especially ethnic communities living across several African countries due to accidents of history.” For example, the Maasai in Kenya, Tanzania, Somali and Ethiopia with similar language but lives as minorities groups; just as the heterogeneous English-speaking people live in the predominantly French-speaking Cameroon. Definitely, the existing character of sub-nationalism in Africa is a challenge to national identity. One of the contributory factors to sub-national consciousness is traceable to colonialists’ arbitrary ruler-ships in Africa, which self-rules now reinforce. Since colonial boundaries never considered cultural affinities, they created artificial divisions in the minds of the Africans with the existing complexity inherent in ethnic groupings and mentalities.

Nowadays, this division results into some ethnic quotas establishing themselves as nation-states in blurred national identity. However, should the growth of nationalism in Africa emerge to pose challenges to the wider national identification processes, the question of national identity could remain blurred. As Bascom (1962) observes, “...tribalism may not be obstacle to self-government but against the formation of the national identity and for Africa to progress it has to unite both economically and politically, otherwise, it would remain under neo-colonialist exploitation.” As Guibernau et al., (2004) argue, “...for national identity to survive four dimensions must be conscientiously imbued, namely: psychological, cultural, historical and political. Accordingly, psychologically, national identity arises when a people are galvanised by the consciousness of closeness and the acceptance to unite themselves as a nation. Such closeness may remain dormant for some time and resurface anytime the nation is confronted with an external or internal adversary. As Connor (1994:12) adds, “...sharing a materially induced national identity among fellow nationals produces an emotional bond, which is profoundly psychological and rational.”

In this perspective, the nation is able to command a person’s loyalty due to the welfare provided through good governance; its nature of a felt kinship and people sharing a feeling of a common prosperity. Thus, the sense of unique descent, must need not, and in nearly all cases will not, accord

with factual history; because almost all nations emanate from fraternisation of peoples of various ethnic origins." Secondly, it is the cultural dimensions which are made up of values, beliefs, customs, conventions, habits, languages and practices, which are passed on from generation to generation in a particular nation." So, the process of accepting a particular culture suggests a strengthened solidary bond among various members of a certain community, who end up identifying one another as fellow nationals. He adds, "This harmony creates imagination of distinctness and belongingness to the others. In order to communicate, the nationals normally use a shared language, in most cases referred to as a state language." For example, in Kenya, the government has recognised the use of Swahili an official indigenous lingua-franca simultaneously with the English Language, although language alone may not forge a national identity.

Thirdly, it is the historical dimensions, which relate to the ability of a nation to trace its history. Herein, antiquities are used to legitimise a nation and its culture, as they emphasise the importance of continuity - a key element in national identity - which ensures the preservation of a nation. Also, individuals are reassured of a collective origin, through the revered actions of their ancestors. Members of a nation have a tendency of feeling proud of their origin in which they derive senses of strength, resilience and even superiority when likened to other nations, which are unable to display such a past. Fourthly, in political dimensions, nations set particular days to commemorate a shared past, which is a reminder of admirable experiences as well as dreadful moments. Kenya's National Day popularly known as *Mashujaa Day* commemorates the struggle by the Mau-Mau fighters to liberate the nation from colonialists. So, history contributes to the formation of a positive image of nation-building by tracing the roots wherefrom certain national characters were forged.

CONSTITUTIONALISM, THE KENYAN STATE AND FAILURE OF A NATIONAL IDENTITY

For **Onalo (2014)** "...the independence Kenyan constitution negotiated in London, without mass contribution from the local Kenyan public, characterised large spectrum of external political influence even upon the ruling party, which amended it over thirty times in a short period, to strengthen the executive branch of government alone with extra power." Thus, the Westminster model embraced at independence was certainly federalist with a bicameral legislature, but it did not connect to the masses' indigenous aspirations towards any adequately devolved state power.

This historical disconnectedness, which failed to construct a national identity, created the agitations for constitutional changes between 1990-1991 with calls for multiparty system, institutionalised presidential term limits and ensconcing of political freedoms. These demands came from various entities - political elite, civil societies' organisation, religious organisations and human rights groups, which grouped to form one movement. In 1991, former president Moi succumbed to some of these demands, ordered constitutional amendment, presidential election, and re-introduction of multi-party politics. With calls for more pluralism, the ruling regime in 1997 created the Kenyan Constitutional Review Act, which was amended in 2001 to account for the drafting of the new constitution (Glinka 2013, Ethel 2016).

Thus, "...constitutionalism effectively started in 1997 climaxing with a referendum in November 2005, still Kenyans felt the new constitution did not capture their aspirations, hence it was defeated with a 57% votes cast; a defeat largely influenced by the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC)" (Andreessen and Tostensen 2005). With the experiences obtained from the post-election violence in 2007 the various actors called for more political reforms, mainly to amend the constitution in

order to address inherent vices and prevent re-occurrence of the 2007 post-election nightmares. As Brown and Sriram (2012) recount:

“Given the inadequacies in creating a national identity even in the amended constitution, violence broke out in Kenya after announcing the December 2007 presidential election result. Immediately, claims of widespread irregularities and fraud in vote counting surfaced. The dimensions are argued as the worst post-election crisis in Kenya’s post-colonial history. Supporters of the opposing parties engaged in fighting, mostly along ethnic lines leading to the death of over one thousand three hundred people and displacing over six hundred thousand persons.”

Accordingly, Brown and Sriram (2012:23) add, “...the violence was ethnically characterised as: (i) spontaneous rioting by the Luo community from Nyanza region after the results were announced by the Electoral Commission giving President Mwai Kibaki win over opposition leader Raila Odinga by a small margin; (ii) deliberate attacks against the Kikuyu community living along the great Rift region by other communities through the use of local militias; (iii) retaliation by the Kikuyus jointly with communities associated with the ruling party against the communities perceived to support the opposition party in central region. The consequences were enormous, as Nairobi and parts of the Great Rift were attacked, with the police using force against the unarmed demonstrators.”

In this wake, Koffi Annan, the then United Nations Secretary General, intervened and succeeded to establish a coalition government. The agreement allowed incumbent President Mwai Kibaki to retain his position, while creating the Prime Minister’s position for Raila Odinga. Thereafter a commission was instituted to investigate the post-election violence and provide a report. At the end the Waki report tabled on 8th October, 2008, recommended the formation of an International Special Tribunal by the Kenyan Government to judge the perpetrators of the 2007 post-election violence. It was agreed that, should the government fail to create such a tribunal, the Commission would pass all the evidence to the International Criminal Court (Brown and Sriram 2012:26). As the Kenya Government toyed with establishing the Tribunal, attempts to present a Bill in parliament flopped in three occasions. This parliamentary failure implied that violence perpetrators would not face justice. The commission’s evidence was therefore handed to Kofi Annan, who forwarded the names of high profile individuals regarded as main perpetrators to the ICC for prosecution, with nobody prosecuted or convicted till this day.

NATIONAL IDENTITY AND NATION-BUILDING IN AFRICAN COUNTRIES: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

Until African masses assume the control of real political power with strong political wills to erase ethnic politics, the prospects for imbuing national identities, necessary for nation-building appear remote. National identity must be inherently characterised by unflinching loyal and patriotic acts, which subdue sectional over national aggrandisement. Certainly, the apparent failures in creating a Kenyan national identity, like elsewhere in Africa, do not obliterate the vitality of national identity in unifying a country. National identity must be borne from senses held by all citizens, constituting a nation, nation-state or state, which senses are embedded in the belief system that form the psyche of the citizens’ political, economic and social aspirations, such as prosperity in unity (Tilly 1975, Armstrong 2001, O’Neil, 2003).

For example, can someone claim to be Kenyan, just because he was born and bred in Kenya, or because, such a person is endowed with Kenyan national culture and goals? Thus, the contentiousness surrounding the national identity question must be resolved, if African countries must emancipate as unified entities, in healthy societies capable of producing viable democracies. If Africans encounter abysmal disparities, which prod extensive agitations for countries' break-ups, instead of unity in prosperity, it is because; there is a regrettable national identity dearth. As O'Neil (2003:47) opines:

"...the national identity dearth, usually accounts for underdevelopment; with cantankerous ethnic inclinations rather than wholesome national affinities. A national identity must strife at breaking barriers between individuals and their country, such that, the country becomes sacrosanct to all citizens. A national identity must be that which allows every individual to competently aspire to any political, business, cultural or social office without any form of discrimination."

Thus, for African countries to gainfully compete with European countries in terms of development, national identity must blossom (Nori 2012, Jackson 2013). National identity should not be considered in isolation, but in terms of how it can propel freedom, equality, progress, prosperity and happiness for all people in a state. However, sometimes national identity can be employed for selfish reasons, as the Pakistan's secession from India in 1947; and the creation of an independent Muslim state can be seen in the light of fostering a national identity (Bendix 1964, North & Thomas 1997). Consequently, although this type of aggrandisement leads to self-determination, as an attribute of national identity; it becomes prevalent, when there is insensitive governance; incarnated by political exclusions, subjugations, oppressions, marginalisation of a section of a people through unfriendly public and foreign policies.

As Guibernau (1996) suggest, three main elements constitute a national identity including: (i) national consciousness, (ii) individual or group publicity of affection to the nation, and (iii) loyalty of nationals to legitimate state institutions. As they argue, with state consciousness, people recognise each other as belonging to the same society." Secondly, Guibernau (1996:43) notes, "...every nation has a public sphere that contains an open zone; common historical heritage; shared economy; mass education and political institutions among many others, all of which facilitate self-publicity." The third element entails interactions of members of a nation with each other, internalising their territory, adherence to the legal and constitutional rules and appreciation of the various social norms and moral maxims; hence creating a sense of loyalty among one another. Membership of a nation is thus significant for self-identification and for the recognition of others as members of one such nation.

As Anderson, (1983) observes, "...national identity must be imagined, imbued, constructed and practicalised through one's actions, within or outside a given territory," while Edwards, (2003:26) claims, "...national identity depends on the uniformity, cultural community and common culture developed and radiated by a people for their common cohesion." Therefore, taking into considerations the above perspectives, national identity is respectful of diversity and differences among the people of one nation. As Edwards (2003:47) argues, "National identity is structured through the idea of citizenship and patriotism, which outranks ethnic, racial, and cultural differences and perceived supremacy, to the assimilating impression of a common culture." Certainly, this arguments explain the concepts 'we' rather than, 'I' feeling, usually anchor within

certain geographical boundaries that govern a nation-state, which comprises a national culture; on historical and cultural perspectives. For instance, if the people of Igbo ethnicity felt secured in their eastern Nigerian homeland as part and parcel of the Nigerian state, the agitation for the Republic of Biafra would have been unattractive (Nsenga 2016:35, Anafi 2017:95).

Accordingly, Edwards, (2003:8) posits, “The mythological quality of a national identity must surpass any other preoccupation in the construction of the senses of oneness and belonging to a unified fatherland - a country.” He asserts, “The national identity in USA is connected to the ‘Mythic March of Progress, Prosperity and Happiness, epitomised by good governance under the finest form of democracy at home; and the noble effort to export such democracy abroad.’ In this sense, myth is not used to invoke the past to legitimise the notion of belonging which constructs a nation as a homogenous or heterogeneous national entity. National identity must be viewed as a linkage to citizenship, culture and patriotism, which subordinates ethnic rivalries and cultural or racial differences as denominators of a national culture.

CONCLUSION

This study undertook a theoretical and empirical analysis of the roles of political regimes, through their unending contentiousness over the national identity question; and to determine how these roles thwart nation-building in African countries, using Kenyan (1963 – 2020) as illustration. Using the historical methodology and the elite theory, the paper argued and divulged how Africans’ successive political regimes through the dearth of national identities, have stimulated the disintegration of African countries, via their egoistic elite preferences, notwithstanding national identity’s locomotive character in positively propelling countries’ politico-economic and socio-cultural growths and unity. Accordingly, it discerned that, national identity’s dearth in African countries facilitates agitations for countries’ break-ups, as evidenced in Senegal-Casamance strife, the Cameroon’s North West and South West Regions Crisis, Sudan and South Sudan; South Sudan and South Sudan; and Ethiopia-Eritrea divides etcetera. The incessant post-elections’ violence in Africa, such as in Kenya 2007, like elsewhere in Africa; Ivory Coast 2010-2011, Cameroon 2018-2019, Nigeria 2018, Guinea Bissau

2020, further elucidate this paper’s arguments. This author strongly holds that, national identity accelerates nation-building and statehoods, hence, it is inevitable in African countries; given their need to acquire permeating economic and political prowess rather than debility.

Finally, this author advocates for the annihilation of the dearth of national identities in African countries, in order to thwart disunity. African leaders must eschew ethnic divides; inordinate crisscrossing and insensitive elite preferences, as antitheses to nation-building. The Hutus’ led-government in Rwanda which egoistically used the national radio station to commit genocide against its brothers – the Tutsis; and Liberia’s Charles Taylor ethnicisation of the LURD rebels to curtail opposition against him are fresh illustrations of governances’ failures. Consequently, good governance remains the sole panacea for deterring antithesis that rebuffs national identities. Away from these, Africa’s landscapes will continue in social, political and economic conflicts, chaos, popular upheavals and permeating human and infrastructural decay, and states’ breakups.

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