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Race, Ethnicity, and Postcolonial Identity: The East African Perspective

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Abstract

The people of Eastern Africa suffer identity maladies related to the establishment of colonial states. Competing European powers had destroyed African beliefs and institutions, sovereignty, freedoms, and sense of legitimacy. They transferred the source of legitimacy to agreements in European capitals, imposed layers of new identities to make people subservient to external wishes. Africans became European subjects and property labeled 'natives' when serving colonial interests. They were also reduced to 'warring tribes' in need of European pacification when they tried to challenge the colonial state. They were not citizens; just slaves in situ.

At independence, the effort to create new identities ran into challenges of acceptability within and outside the new states. Did the people accept they were part of the new state ruled by people who were not European? The challenges, connected to colonial conditioning, were both internal and external and had religious, ethnic, racial, language, and ideological attributes. Neighbouring states shared border people who wondered what they were or why they had to choose between two or more states. Then there were extra-continental powers, seemingly determined to ensure that the African post-colonial state failed.

Extra-continental forces supervised the transition from colonialism to independence. They largely succeeded in placing their chosen African leaders, as 'neo-colonial' agents, in critical governance and economic positions. These were to protect external interests against internal challenges and became good at denigrating anything African, and some regretted they were born black. In their mental subservience, they tended to glorify the colonial past and allowed imperial interpreters of Africa perpetually to interpret what is good for Africans. They became sources of identity friction and collided with those trying to distance themselves from colonial evils. The ensuing struggle to recreate identities that promote the essence of being African and sense of Pan-Africanism in the midst of hostile imperial designs affects one's perspective on belonging.

Key words: *race, ethnicity, post-colonial, identity*

Introduction

Many issues bedevil postcolonial Africa and one of them is that of the search for identity. That search is a civilization process in which people coalesce and organize themselves into a civil entity that becomes different from others. It forces people to dig deep into their history on how and why they came to be who they believe they are. In their search for origins, they end up with a belief in God as the starting point. It becomes a matter of faith. As Kihumbu Thairu argues, "there are no people in the world who have not got a God of their own, a God who speaks their own language and who shares in the ups and downs of their particular nation."[1] Since GOD cannot be questioned or be subjected to scholarly reasoning, the rudiments of religion are established.[2] The subsequent organized activities around the faith become the religion of that people with all the appropriate paraphernalia that include 'priests' to commune with God for the people. This was the reality in different parts of Africa before colonialism adulterated African religions as a way of destroying identity to facilitate colonial control.

The Destruction of African sovereignty, legitimacy, and identity

The establishment of colonial states was a racist undertaking to deny legitimacy to Africans. It relied on a created myth of European scientific greatness, based on Immanuel Kant's racist musings that equaled blackness with "stupidity."[3] With an air of *scientific* authority, the myth became a religious tool of imperialism.[4] In placing Africans at the bottom of the human ladder, Kant asserted that Africans "must be driven apart from each other with thrashings."[5]

The creation of the colonial state implemented Kant's idea of driving Africans apart "with thrashings". It set out to destroy African "religion of fetishes", Ali Mazrui noted, with Christian

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[1] Kihumbu Thairu, *The African Civilization: Utamaduni wa Kiafrika*(Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1975), p. 66
[2] Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (London: Black Swan, 2006), pp.151-154.
[3] Justin E.H. Smith, "The Enlightenment's 'Race' Problem, and Ours," *The New York Times,* The Stone: Opinion Pages, February 10, 2013, http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/02/10/why-has-race-surv accessed 4/21/2015; Charles Wade Mills, *Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race*(Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), pp. 67, 72-74
[4] Paul K. Feyerabend, *Against Method: Outline of an Anarchist Theory of Knowledge* (New York: Verso Books, 2010); William Storage, "Paul Feyerabend- The Worst Enemy of Science," *THE MULTIDISCIPLINARIAN*, 7 August 2012 http://themultidisciplinarian.com/2012/08/7/the -worst-enemy-of-science/ accessed 15/10/2016;
[5] Immanuel Kant, as translated by John T. Goldthwait, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime* 2nd Paperback edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), pp. 110-111

missionaries "laying the ideological foundations of colonialism …based on the Europeanization of Christianity on the myth that Christianity was European and Euro-Christians themselves were the bearers of human civilization."[6] The reality was that Christian missionaries, as agents of colonialism, made Africans poor by depriving them of their heritage so that they can be properly controlled.[7]

Using an education system which prepared white children to be leaders and policy makers while "natives" were trained to become labourers or at best junior clerks serving the interests of the state,[8] missionaries actually competed to train the "natives" to be obedient employees.[9] They became, Jomo Kenyatta asserted in 1938, "professional friends of Africa" who kept Africans ignorant and considered an African who writes to be "encroaching on their preserves."[10] The main purpose of missionary provided education, Tom Askwith, a Kenyan colonial official, explained, "was not how to read, write and do arithmetic, but how … to behave towards parents and those in authority like chiefs and the Government, and finally, of course, to God."[11] Missionaries competed to produce compliant natives so intensely that some kind of religious zoning was adopted.[12] They competed to train Africans on how to obey Europeans. To a large extent, they succeeded in expunging African systems of faith

Other than expunging African religious beliefs, colonialism created new identities that remained constant sources of conflicts. This was by dividing the same people into subjects of different colonial states. All Africans in one colonial state were lumped together as "natives" that were presumably different from their relatives across the border who became "natives" of other colonial states. In each territory, law became the political instrument for convincing different peoples that

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[6] Ali A. & Alamin M. Mazrui, *The Power of Babel: Language &Governance in the African Experience(*Nairobi: E.A.E.P., 1998), p. 164

[7] G. Macharia Munene, "Intercultural Conflict: The Fight Over Female Circumcision, 1914-1932", *Mila: A Journal of the Institute of African Studies,* Vol. 1, 1996, pp 73-88.

[8] D.N. Sifuna, "European Settlers as a Factor Influencing Government Policy and Practice in African Education in Kenya 1900-1962", *Kenya Historical Review* Vol. 4, No. 1, 1976, pp. 69-80.

[9] Anne King, "J.W. Arthur and African Interests," in B.E. Kipkorir, editor, *Biographical Essays on Imperialism and Collaboration in Colonial Kenya*(Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1980), pp. 95-97.

[10] Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya: The Traditional Life of the Gikuyu* (Nairobi: Kenway edition, 1978)p. xviii

[11] T.G. Askwith, *Kenya's Progress* (Nairobi: The Eagle Press, 1958), p.82

[12] Julius Gathogo, "The Early Attempts at Ecumenical Co-operation in East Africa: The Case of the Kikuyu Conference of 1913," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiassticae*, October 2010, 36(2), p. 7

they were the same, namely "natives," in the service of colonial interests.[13] At the same time, there was effort to create distinctions amongst the natives when it came to political issues that challenged the colonial state.[14] With independence, the "native" identity should have been transformed into "citizens" of the post-colonial state but this did not happen. Instead, there was emphasis on "tribe" which made some people within and across the various borders to reject citizenship of new states.

Creating the postcolonial state

Independence brought with it challenges of creating postcolonial states which inherited colonial structures and policies and gave impression of widespread disorder,[15]even as they searched for fresh identity. The imprecise nature of colonially imposed boundaries left room for perpetual identity disputes across international and internal boundaries of the new states. The disputes become extra serious when referring to people on the borderlines of two or more countries. Those along any border tend to have divided loyalties or are not clear as to which country they belong. Convincing such people that they owe loyalty to one country and not the other is problematic and can be a source of constant friction. If they owe loyalty to the neighbouring country and yet they live in another, the implication is that they do not accept the sovereignty of their country of residence.

The challenge then was on how to re-orient such people to accept a country in which they live but also believe that it is not their country. At the centre was the question of who should claim to own or occupy what land and other resources, based on which historical justification and under what circumstances. This was especially so at the frontiers, whether internal or external, and independence did not clear frontier identity challenges. Instead there were debates on which pre-colonial identity to reinforce at the expense of which colonial one.

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[13] Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and Genocide in Rwanda* Kampala: Fountain Publishers, 2001), pp. 22-28

[14] Macharia Munene, "Historical Perspective on Ethnic Relations in Kenya," *Wajibu: A Journal of Social and Religious Concern,* Vol. 7(3), 1992, pp. 2-6.

[15] Crawford Young, "Review Article: Deciphering Disorder in Africa, Is Identity the Key," *World Politics* 54, July 2002, pp. 532-537

The debates created doubts about the new states, despite nation building efforts that included crafting new constitutions, and eroded reverence for authority. Some people within the state refused to accept new post-colonial realities or insisted on identifying with entities other than the one they found themselves in. Others adopted the political doctrine of exclusivity within their newly created "tribes" in colonially manufactured "traditional" exclusive zones in order to reject "outsiders." In some instances, the extremes of such debates and beliefs in exclusivity produced Somali irredentism, the Rwanda genocide, and continuing frictions along the Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Somali borders.

There was also the challenge of handling inherited religions in the search for fresh identity and imagery. Religious mistrust, based on senses of exclusivity which operates on perceptions of faith, made common identity difficult. Claims of universalisation of particular faiths entailed exclusivity.[16] This was monopolization of God by denying the validity of other faiths[17] which then relegates other Gods to the realm of un-divinity and even dismissal as *satanic.* Post-colonial states were not able to deal with divisiveness arising from inherited exclusive Christian religions, the competing Islamic religions, or remnants of particular African faiths.

Thus, Africans found themselves caught in the intra-Christian fights as well as in the inter-Abrahamic crusade/jihad feuds as to which religion was the best. Samuel P. Huntington's *Clash of Civilisation*[18] captured the globally competing crusade/jihad mentality. Christian affiliated writers referred to Muslims in such unfriendly terms as "hordes" of "fanatical warriors" spreading their faith and law by war and being about war but not salvation[19] In contrast, Muslim thinkers tended to be defensive. Comparatively, Ali Mazrui argued, Islam is less racist/violent and more tolerant/ecumenical than European Christianity which claims to be universal.[20]

[16] Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (London: The Free Press, 2005), pp. 15, 24-25

[17] Polylog, "Universalism, Global Apartheid, and Justice: Ali A. Mazrui in Dialogue with Fouad Kalouche," *polylog: Forum for Intercultural Philosophy 4(2003)* http://them.polylog.org/4/dma-en.htm accessed 9/29/2016

[18] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilisations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996)

[19] Reza Aslan, *No God but God: The Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam*(New York: Random House, 2005) , p. 79

[20]Dr. Ali A. Mazrui. 1997. "Islamic and Western Values," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 1997, Volume 76, No. 5, pp. 118-132

Such religious feuds complicated the ability of postcolonial Africa to develop common identities and ended up with religious hybridity. African scholars like Reverend John Mbiti went out of their way to 'prove' pre-colonial African religiosity. Mbiti, an Anglican pastor, even accused Europeans of 'raping' the New Testament through mistranslations of the original.[21] John Gatu annoyed such Western religious leaders as Evangelist Billy Graham by calling for a moratorium on missionary in Africa in order to reduce dependency on the West.[22] With many competing Western 'evangelicals' trying to set shop in Africa, there was proliferation of new 'Christian' denominations with very imaginative names. Since pecuniary interests appeared to outweigh spiritual inspiration, the splintering increased and occasional physical fighting took place among the 'bishops'.

Besides the development of religious hybridity, there was the question of the language to be used in creating the new identity in the context of the nation and the region. The search for unifying language in the midst of hundreds of languages and dialects, each with its own cultural attributes, was a struggle as to what to stress and what to discard. Should the new African states conduct their affairs in colonially inherited English, French, Arabic, or Portuguese or should they promote strategic African languages in creating African identities? Ngugi wa Thiongó is in the forefront of promoting African languages, especially his Gikuyu language, as a way of decolonizing the mind and fighting imperialism.[23] His books, plays and novels, attract global attention but his crusade runs into the challenge of finding a culturally acceptable and unifying African language. In Eastern Africa, Kiswahili became very attractive as a unifying language that was essentially African while not necessarily downplaying other African languages. The spread of Kiswahili to East and Central Africa has acted so well as an agency of creating common identity that other African sub-regions consider adopting it.

[21] John Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London: Heinemann, 1969); Macharia Munene, "Mbiti defended African religion, but was not feted, " *The Standard* , November 2022

[22] Robert Reese, "John Gatu and the Moratorium on Missionaries, " *Missiology: An International Review*, June 2013, Volume 43 (3), pp. 245-256; Michael Cassidy, "The Call to Moratorium (Perspective on an Identity Crisis) https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/churchman/090-04_265pdf

[23] Justus Kizito Siboe Makokha, "Why Ngugi wa Thiong'o champions mother tongue," *The Star*, July 3, 2021

Ideological Orientations

Besides borders and claims to monopolization of God, was the divisive issue of ideology; there was no consistent postcolonial ideological line, even within individual countries. Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana popularized *neo-colonialism* to refer to African countries who continued to be tied to the West.[24] Nkrumah and his ideological rival, Felix Houphey Boigny of Ivory Coast, had entered into a 10 Year wager in 1957 on which country would be better off. No one collected on the bet because Nkrumah was overthrown in 1966.[25] Boigny did not want to deviate from French paternalism. One of the men groomed to inherit the colonial state and remain attached to colonial powers economically and socio-politically in a master state client state relations, he was one of those mesmerized to sink into "aid addiction" and thus could not challenge the exploitative relationship[26]. He was one of those who agreed to the French "Colonial Pacts" that gave Paris 85% control of local currencies, all mineral rights, and control of defence and foreign policies.[27]

There were multiple ideological interpretations. Expansionists disregarded inherited colonial boundaries. Somalia, ssuffering multiple colonial identities of both Britain and Italy, unsuccessfully tried to suppress internal differences by adopting an irredentist Pan-Somali ideology that advanced the idea of state elasticity which threatened the survival of other new states. Those others argued for the doctrine of in-contractibility of states. The failure of that ideology, the Greater Somalia dream, led to the fragmentation of the country. With no ideology to hold them together, competing identities based on different colonial experiences emerged and Somalia deteriorated into a civil war that helped to fragment the state.[28]

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[24] Kwame Nkrumah, *Neo-colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*(New York: International Publishers, 1965)

[25] Crawford Young, *Ideology and Development in Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), pp.1-3

[26] Macharia Munene, "Aid Peddlers and Aid Addicts: a Discourse on Postmodern Colonialism in Kenya," *Journal of Science Technology Education and Management (J-Stem), A Publication of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology,* Volume 1, Number1, 2007, pp. 181-190

[27] Robert Mugabe, "Good that Outtara is the Cote d'Ivoire President but what about the Colonial Pact," May 7, 2011, http://greatlakesvoice.com/?p=908 accessed May 18, 2011; Gary K. Bush, " Cote D'Ivoire: The French Freemasons and Neo-colonial Wars," January 5, 2011, http://www.africaresource.com/rasta/sesostris-the great-the egyptian-hercules/cote-divoire... accessed May 18, 2011.

[28] Macharia Munene, "How Somalia slowly disintegrated into small pieces of troubled nations," Africa Review, July 1, 2010, http://www.africareview.com/AfricaAt50/-/1001198/992230/-view/printVersion/-/x9vj15 accessed on October 23, 2010

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During the Cold War, Somalia tended to fluctuate between Moscow and Washington. In excitement at a seeming victory of weaning Mogadishu from Moscow's embrace, Washington blundered into supporting Siad Barre's irredentist invasion of Ogaden presumably because Addis Ababa claimed to be Marxist. As a result the failure in Ogaden, Somalia disintegrated after the 1991 ouster of President Mohammed Siad Barre.[29] Many Somali elite, led by dethroned Barre, fled the country, and created a power vacuum that made Somalia vulnerable and attractive to external interests. These included powerful countries and terror groups as the Al Shabaab who derived their inspiration from Osama Bin Laden's Al Qaeda which had turned its wrath on the United States and its allies in his 1996 "Declaration of War" on what he called the "Crusader-Zionist Alliance"[30] Some elite escaped to Western countries where they became 'citizens', and were sent back to Somalia as 'aid' workers, nation builders, and proxies for powerful extra-continental forces that destabilize the region.

Somalia is under external pressure to play proxy. Having failed in its land irredentism in the 1960s and 1970s, Somalia turned its irredentist proclivities to the sea, as egged on by imperial powers, to target the wealth at the Kenyan coast by grabbing Kenyan waters.[31] Euro-proxy Somalia took Kenya to a political court, the International Court of Justice, ICJ, with Somali national as presiding judge. Subsequently, the validity of the ICJ opinions remained questionable and ignorable[32]

Outside Somalia, the ideological rivalry between Kenya and Tanzania led to debates on different versions of socialism. Kenya confronted two interrelated transitional challenges; establish credibility in the community of nations and meet high expectations from the new citizens without plunging the country into chaos or losing standing as pan-africanist champion. To do that, Kenya avoided socialistic ideologies by remaining capitalistic. Kenyatta, in his first Madaraka Day speech, June 1, 1963, warned that the "Marxist theory of class warfare" was irrelevant to Kenya and added: "attitudes which were appropriate when we were fighting for independence have to be

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[29]Bahru Zewde, "Embattled Identity in Northeast Africa: A Comparative Essay," in Heinrich Boll, *In Quest for a Culture of Peace in the Igad Region: The Role of Intellectuals and Scholars*(Nairobi: Heinrich Boll Foundation, 2006), pp. 21-22)

[30] Karen Armstrong, *Fields of Blood: Religion and the History of Violence*(London: Vintage, 2014), pp. 345-347

[31] Macharia Munene, "Who is Behind Plot to Annex Our Borders," *The Standard,* April 1, 2019; Mark Bichache, "Foreign Firms Spoiling Kenya-Somalia Ties," *The Standard,* July 17, 2019

[32]Macharia Munene, "Somalia Leads Neighbours in Giving Kenya Hard Time," *The Standard*, July 8, 2019

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revised."[33] To terminate the debate on socialism, Kenyatta's government issued the 1965 *Sessional Paper Number 10: African Socialism and Its Application to Planning in Kenya* that made it clear that African socialism meant capitalism with a Kenyan twist and that there was no room for scientific socialism.[34] Kenyatta then proceeded to tell those complaining about scientific socialism to keep quiet.[35] They did not.

Instead, Kenya appeared to grow as an example of a willing *neo-colonial state* in two ways. First was the increase in its class gap, what JM Kariuki called ten millionaires in the midst of ten million beggars. Second, ethnic divisiveness became dominant in the politics of Kenyatta's possible death and who would replace him. Kenyatta had been expected to die in jail which explained the rivalry between Western supported Tom Mboya and Eastern endorsed Oginga Odinga. His health led to constitutional changes that placed Daniel arap Moi in a strategic position as vice-president to inherit the presidency in 1978.

As president, Moi proposed his slogan of *Nyayo* but in the 1980s he gradually found the West unaccommodating. Having to explain human rights violations to Western powers, he admitted in Paris in 1989, "Of course we torture people … but we don't torture everybody. We torture the ringleaders of Mwakenya; otherwise how can we find out information from them? They are bent to destroy our society."[36] The West rebuffed Moi at the same time that Kenya suffered for being excessively close to the West. It was bombed by international terrorists in 1998 and 2001 because of this closeness. Moi went to the extent of demonstrating on the streets to show support for Americans after the September 11, 2001 attack in New York. Leader of Official Opposition Mwai Kibaki then accused Moi as having "knee-jerk" policies.[37] Kibaki became president in 2002 and

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[33] Quotes in Munene, G.M. "Constitutional Development in Kenya: A Historical Perspective," in Vyas, Y., Kibwana, K., Okech-Owiti, Wanjala, S. editors, *Law and Development in the Third World*(Nairobi: Faculty of Law, University of Nairobi, 1994), pp. 58-59
[34] Colin Leys, *Underdevelopment in Kenya: The Political Economy of Neo-Colonialism, 1964-1971*(Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1974), pp. 220-224.
[35] Kenyatta's statement on "African Socialism" in Kenyatta, J. *Suffering Without Bitterness: The Founding of the Kenya Nation* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1968), p.273.
[36] See Quote in "Moi's Grisly Ways," *Africa Analysis,* 17 March 1989, p. 10.
[37] Mwai Kibaki, "Specific Policy to Fight Terror Required," *Daily Nation*, November 21, 2001

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said in his inaugural speech that he believed in making Kenya "rich once again, earn respect in Africa, and earn respect in the world."[38]

To the south of Kenya is Tanzania, a postcolonial creation that combines two countries of Tanganyika and Zanzibar in order to forge new identities. The dominant experience in Zanzibar was one of Arab pre-British and German claims to rule the East African coast. Under the League of Nations new "mandate system", German East Africa was split into two with Britain taking the large part. On acquiring independence, led by Julius Nyerere, Tanganyika was involved in two experimental undertakings. One was to push the idea of political federation of the region but suspicion lingered and still lingers on. The best that came out of the effort was the 1967 creation of the East African Community that lasted ten years and was heavily dependent on the presidents for policy formulation and implementation. Developing ideological differences, personality clashes, and quarrels on the spoils of the disappearing East African Common Services made it difficult to grow common identity. Second, Julius Nyerere came up with the 1967 *Arusha Declaration* which was more anti-capitalistic and was a serious attempt at "socialism".[39]

Although *Ujamaa* was an economic disaster, it was great national identity builder. What was more, the unification with Zanzibar created new identity challenges in the sense that the Zanzibari never quite accepted mainland policies thereby implying there was constant internal friction. This internal friction affected relations with people from other East African states. Added to Tanzania's ideological orientation that was hostile particularly to Kenya, the dream of the East African Community could not be sustained and so in 1977, the community collapsed and some people celebrated.

Nyerere's *Ujamaa* experiment seemingly inspired Milton Obote to come up with his own 1969 *Common Man's Charter,* an ideological half way house which was more *socialistic* than Kenyatta's *African Socialism* and less than Nyerere's *Ujamaa.* Thereafter, Obote kicked Kenyans out of Uganda because they were capitalistic. Kenya found itself isolated especially in the 1970s

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[38] Mwai Kibaki, Inaugural Address, December 30, 2002, *www.statehousekenya.go.ke/speeches/kibaki*
[39] Julius K. Nyerere, *Ujamaa: Essays on Socialism* (London: Oxford University Press, 1968)

which made pursuing the East African Community dream hard. Instead, member countries closed borders, threatened to or actually invaded each other, and with the Marxist power grab in Ethiopia in 1974, Kenya appeared like a capitalistic island in the sea of socialistic experimenters. Some Kenyan officials wanted little to do with their socialistic neighbours and celebrated when the East African Community was pronounced dead in 1977.

Like Somalia, Ethiopia went through ideological fluctuation and stared fragmenting instead of increasing its sense of oneness. It was well placed to be a spiritual source of Pan African inspiration due to its success in the 1896 Battle of Adowa and tribulations in the 1930s that gave rise to the Jamaica based Rastafarian movement whose impact is evident in the popularity of Reggae music across the African continent. As a symbol of African identity and unity, it became the headquarters of the Organisation of African Unity and African Union. Its inability to remain focused, however, made it lose its pre-eminence. No longer a source inspiration for unity, it became a source of regional concern. It ended up in prolonged civil wars and fragmentation with Eritrea separated from Ethiopia only for the two to engage in real war.

The new Eritrean leader, Isaaih Afwerki, appeared to be in search of recognition by trying to reorganise the neighbourhood. He was an example on how to centralise power and undercut potential political challengers which portended disaster to Ethiopia and Somalia. He even managed to make Ethiopia and Somalia join Eritrea in what seemed like a short lived anti-Kenya alliance labelled Horn of Africa Cooperation, HoAC.[40] No unity was achieved, only that internal and regional frictions increased.

Strategies to contain postcolonial Africa

One of the key postcolonial challenges is on who interprets, and gives identity to Africa and as such African intellectuals find themselves in perpetual struggle to control interpretation of the continent. Iinterpreting Africa has been contentious because interpretation means power to control thoughts and events in Africa and the Africans or related peoples. Right at the beginning of the

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[40]Tnnja Muller, "Eritrea Goes From Pariah State to Regional Powerbroker," *World Political Review,* June 1, 2021; Guled Ahmed, "An Emboldened Horn of Africa Axis and an Unfolding Humanitarian Crisis Await the Biden Administration," *Middle East Institute,* December 25, 2020

20th Century, two approaches to the interpretation of the Africans, one imperial and one 'native'', arose. The imperial approach aims at finding the best way to control the Africans, the 'native' approach aims at finding ways to liberate Africans and people of African descent outside the continent from perceived imperial mental and material oppression.

Realising this, African elite and people of African descent have over time tried to reclaim the right to interpret Africa because they believe that the motive behind the position taken by non-African interpreters is to exploit the Africans. These two approaches set the background to two conferences in London in 1900 that were, for different motives, to affect future interpretations of the Africans.[41] African intellectuals questioned colonial assumptions and helped to shake Euro-intellectual comfort. Kenyatta's 1938 *Mount Kenya* challenged colonial benevolence. After World War II, Cheikh Anta Diop's *African Origins of Civilization: Myth or Reality* drew attention to European adjustments of ancient Egyptian history in effort to justify colonization.[42] Euro-intellectuals had relocated Egypt out of Africa into a mental Europe.

The native approach appeared to succeed with the attainment of independence in the 1960s and there was much support up to the 1970s as African states found their places in the arena of world affairs. This support appeared to disappear in the 1980s and countries in Eastern Africa went through serious internal transformations that were partly induced by competing powers who were generally disdainful of Africans. They turned the region into an imperial playing field, and they like it fragmented and incapable of projecting its interests. They assume they are right in doing anything including changing governments because they have might and technology on their side.[43] They use forces of globalization which represented economic and political configurations that tended to reduce the importance of states. These configurations are in the form of global economic institutions that are theoretically independent of states and that are so powerful that they make

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[41] Macharia Munene, chapter on "Africa and the Interpreters," in *Historical Reflections on Kenya: Intellectual Adventurism, Politics, and International Relations* (Nairobi: University of Nairobi Press, March 2012)
[42] Cheikh Anta Diop, *The African Origins of Civilization: Myth or Reality*(Westport, Conn.: Lawrence Hill, 1974)
[43] Stephen Chan, *Out of Evil: New: New International Politics and Old Doctrines of War*(London: I.B. Tauris, 2005), p. 21

most states irrelevant. They propel internal debates to render states fragile and thereby affect internal political and economic well-being.[44]

The effect is to downsize states, make them ineffective in delivering services[45] and then blame them by emphasising the failure of states to provide those services. This explains making rulers in a state lose legitimacy in the eyes of citizens whose sense of loyalty shifts to new centers[46]. The subsequent call for privatization seemingly aimed at destroying the state ability to provide services to ordinary people.[47] In the process, imperial powers engages in "new racism" that limits freedoms for those that the West consider as "lowlife" and justifies the return of "imperial over lordship" while still claiming they are maintaining international law.[48] They make identification with anything African difficult.

They do that as big powers who exercise what amounts to a *prerogative of the mighty* doctrine that assumes big powers are right and rational because they have might and technology on their side.[49] This makes the international scene appear haphazard like Kenya's *matatu* phenomenon. In the seeming *matatu madness* is an evolved cultural behavior that makes things flow despite the flaws based on expectations that *matatu* drivers will flout the traffic rules and the rest are expected or forced to adjust to that reality.[50] In their *matatu* behavior, big powers throw their weight around and ignore world opinion and international law and are expected to get away with it.

In that state of contrived lawlessness, the Africanists, other experts, and policy makers wanted to keep the Africans divided; like Kant's 'thrashing' suggestion. In March 1978, for instance, US President Jimmy Carter's authorized the NSC Interdepartmental Group for Africa to review the

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[44] Eka Ikpe, "Challenging the Discourse on Fragile States," *Conflict, Security & Development,* Volume 7, Number 1, 2007, p. 86

[45] Oswald de Rivero, *The Myth of Development* (London: Zed Books, 2001).

[46] Macharia Munene, *The Politics of Transition in Kenya, 1995-1998* (Nairobi: Quest and Insight, 2001), pp.49-52, 54, 94-96

[47] Shivji, Issa G. 2000. "Critical Elements of a New Democratic Consensus in Africa," in Haroub Othman, ed. *Reflections on Leadership in Africa: Forty Years After Independence, Essays in Honour of Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere on the Occasion of His 75th Birthday* (Dar es Salaam: University of Dar es Salaam Press, 2000), pp. 25-38.

[48] Philip Darby, "Security, Spatiality, and Social Suffering," <u>Alternatives</u>, Volume 31, 2006, pp. 461, 463

[49] Chan, *Out of Evil*, p. 21

[50] Makumi Mwagiru and Cirino Hiteng Ofuho, "Towards a *Matatu* Epistemology of International Relations: African Perspectives," *African Review of Foreign Policy*, Volume 1, No. 2, July 1999, pp. 31-35

relations between black Africa and Black America. The intent was to ensure perpetual division between the Africans in the continent and the Africans in the American diaspora because their unity was supposedly detrimental to US interests.[51] Racism persisted as Africanists portrayed post-colonial Africa as a place of chaos that was open to be an imperial waste dumping site. World Bank Advisor Larry Summers, later one of President Barack Obama's economic advisors, championed "garbage imperialism''.[52] In December 1991 he suggested exporting "dirty industries'' to LDCs, and argued that parts of Africa were "under-populated'' and "vastly under-polluted.''[53] Africa would then receive industrial waste include nuclear, expired medicines, technology out-of-dates, and even contaminated foods in Africa.

By then, identification with Africa waned and they no longer had 'pervasive guilt' that stopped them 'from saying what they truly believe.'[54] Claiming to be 'depressed' by realities in Africa, they called for neo-colonial masters to replace their agents of capitalism and imperialism.[55] They advocated redrawing the map and claimed that sovereignty in Africa as farce, 'phantom' or 'mirage',[56] and that the existence of some African states threatened world security. They suggested sharing of sovereignty of African states with external entities[57] and wanted US Barrack Obama to use "moral authority" derived from his "African identity" to help mount coups in targeted states.[58] European colonialism in Africa, former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson once argued, was

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[51] New Africa, "Divide and rule… How Africans and African-Americans are prevented from working together," *New Africa*, February 2008, pp. 72-75

[52] Joan W. Kimani, "Hi-tech Yet Highly Toxic; Electronic and E-Waste,'' *The Journal of Language, Technology & Entrepreneurship in Africa*, Volume 1, November 2, 2009, pp. 46, 54; Cahil Milmo, 'Dumped in Africa; Britain's Toxic Waste, Children Exposed to Poisonous Material in Defense of UK Law.'' *The Independent,* Wednesday, 18 February 2009; Najad Abdullahi,''Toxic Waste' Behind Somalia Piracy,'' *Aljazeera Net.* Saturday. October 11, 2008 0921 GMT

[53] Jim Vallette,''Larry Summers' War Against the Earth,'' in *Counter Punch,* 1999, Global Policy Forum gpf@globalpolicy.org

[54] Marc Epprecht, "Africanists and Responsibility: Some Reflections," *African Studies Quarterly*, Volume 7, Issue 2 & 3, Fall 2003, pp.203-204

[55] Gavin Kitching, "Why I gave up African Studies," *MOTS PLURIELS* , no 16 December 2000, http://www.arts.uwa.edu.au/MotsPluriels/MP1600gk.html accessed 1/30/ 2013

[56] G. Pascal Zachary, 2010. "Africa Needs a New Map," *Foreign Policy*, April 28. http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/04/28/africa_needs_a_new_map?print+yes&... Accessed on October 18, 2010

[57] Brennan M Kraxberger. 2007. "Failed States: Temporary Obstacles to Democratic Diffusion or fundamental holes in the world political map?" *Third World Quarterly*, Volume 28, Number 6. pp. 1055-1071

[58] Paul Collier, "In Praise of the Coup: Military Takeovers Can be a Good Thing for African Democracy," *The New Humanist: The Magazine for Free Thinkers*, 2009, Volume 124, Issue 2, March/April.

not bad. "The problem is not that we were once in charge," he wrote, "but that we are not in charge any more…. The best fate for Africa would be if the old colonial powers, or their citizens, scrambled once again in her direction; on the understanding that this time they will not be asked to feel guilty."[59] They advance a sanitized intellectual anti-African rhetoric based on a belief that the West has rights to enslave and reshape the Africans.[60]

One way of re-enslaving, re-shaping, and keeping the Africans divided was to impose selected versions of international law on the continent. They justify interventions which acquire a sense of normalcy, with France being very good at it.[61] The French intervened either to ensure survival of its men in power or to depose them after they outlived their usefulness.[62] In Rwanda, for instance, the French helped to train and arm the *interahamwe* who were largely responsible for the genocide.[63] They helped to engineer a new imperial doctrine, Right to Protect, R2P, seemingly to serve two purposes. First was self-cleansing process for the guilt of having facilitated the genocide. Second, it was to give the imperial powers an excuse to intervene and impose puppets as rulers. In doing so, they turned their sense of guilt into a weapon for attacking targeted states.[64]

What all this amounts to is that the people of postcolonial Eastern Africa have had constant struggle to find a unifying identity to serve their interests. They experienced internal and external obstacles to that search for common identity. They were mostly creations of competing extra-continental imperial powers who destroyed African beliefs and institutions, sovereignty, freedoms, and sense of legitimacy in order to enslave the Africans through divisive colonial states. The destruction of

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[59] Quote in Justin Salhan, "Britain's New Foreign Secretary Says British Colonialism in Africa Wasn't So Bad," *Thinkprogress*, July 14, 2016 http://thinkprogress.org/world/2016/07/14/2798369/boris-johnson-africa   accessed 7/17/2016

[60] Archille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California press, 2001), pp. 28-29; Bessie, *Western Supremacy*, p. 16

[61] "Comoros: Reforming 'the Coup-Coup Islands' ," *IRIN*, http://www.irinnews.org/PrintReport.aspx?ReportId=83144"

[62] Robert D. Grey, "A Balance Sheet on External Assistance: France and Africa," *The Journal of Modern African Studies,* Volume 28, Number 1, 1990, pp. 102-105; McGowan, "African Military," p.357

[63] John James Quinn, "Diffusion and Escalation in the Great Lakes: The Rwandan Genocide, The Rebellion in Zaire, and Mobutu's Overthrow," in Steven E. Lobell and Philip Mauceri, editors, *Ethnic Conflict and International Politics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p.119; "We Trained Interhamwe & Ex-FAR as translators along French Soldiers," *Rwanda News Agency,* Thursday, 02, October 2008.

[64] Macharia Munene, "West has devised ways of escaping responsibility for its wrongs in Africa," *The Standard,* October 10, 2022

African identity aroused resistance within the created new colonial geographical realities that led to independence in the 1960s.

Independence brought fresh challenges of creating nations out of the contrived colonial entities. Creating postcolonial identities experienced problems of what that identity should be, whether to retrieve precolonial cultures in the context of the inherited state and marry them with changing realities. There was religious divisiveness, language confusion, and question of acceptability within and outside the new states. Conditioned to believe they were one, natives, only when serving the colonial masters, there were those who had problems accepting fellow Africans as government. Heightened ethnic consciousness and ideological debates increased separateness rather than draw people to common identity. The same people on the border struggled to identify with one or the other country and often ignored both. And extra-continental powers worked to ensure that the African post-colonial state failed.

As they struggled to create a Pan-Africanist identity, there were setbacks especially in after the 1970s when extra-continental powers rekindled Kant's idea of separating Africans through thrashing. There were increasing calls to recolonize Africa, to shift blame, and to make it difficult for unity. While some Africans regretted being born black as they glorified colonialism, imperial interpreters of Africa intensified effort to interpret what was good for Africans. Still, the struggle to advance and maintain a Pan-African identity lingers on.