

# An assessment of the nexus between ethno-politics and public diplomacy in Kenya

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**Abstract:** - Kenya's domestic political climate is getting new a definition from election violence to highly contested elections. The constant protest of presidential election results has been adding twist to Kenya's foreign relations and presenting dilemma for both domestic and foreign publics. Looking at the country's policy determinants such as the nature of state political party interests, government leaders' capabilities and decision-making systems implored during the 2007/08 crisis, the study critically analyses government management of public diplomacy in violent situations. Though the study area lacks a theoretical underpinning it adopts a critical approach on ethnic group representative powers and dynamics of conflict. The study uses mixed method research design to explore ethno political mobilization in Kenya. It carries out an analysis of public diplomacy and its relative importance in societal associations with specific reference to ethno-politics. In its evaluation of the principles of equality and democracy, the paper critically assesses government's ability to defuse ethnic political conflicts and improve horizontal cohesion. The study argues out that governments promote political interests through manipulation of ethnic differences. However, institutions tend to remain dormant with no serious attempt to deal with root causes of conflicts rather than controlling conflict resolution and mediation mechanisms.

**Keywords:** Ethno-politics, Public diplomacy, Political climate

## I. INTRODUCTION

The ancient basis for social association and national identity is ethnic identity. It is a potential force in societies and in its own rights, it is both a uniting and a dividing line and the most salient.<sup>1</sup> Reinforced by social, tribal, class differences or territorial identity, the interaction of ethnic cleavages with electoral laws has circumscribed the identity of recognition in most countries.<sup>2</sup> Michael Ross defines ethno-politics as an examination of relationship between ethnicity and culture as forms of collective political identity. It is the formation of beliefs, values and preferences with ethnicity as a cultural tool for political competition. Kenya has been a peaceful country except during elections when citizens tend to align themselves to different political parties. These alignments are majorly ethnic and not manifesto driven. As a democratic country, Kenya has been accommodating ethno-political demands from

different groups and parties. This paper therefore carries out an assessment of the nexus between public diplomacy on ethnic aggregation of preferences that occur through electoral systems and their consequent conflict outcomes.

## II. RECAPITULATION OF ETHNO-POLITICS IN KENYA

Domestic politics do not easily result in peaceful actions but always create room for foreign meddling possibilities. Elections for most countries normally result into frequent squabbles, government change, power showdown and suffering of the larger populace. In pursuit of actions that are ethnic in nature, governments overlook citizens' abilities to engage in cost-benefit analyses. According to the Oxford Dictionary, Ethno Politics relates to the politics of race or ethnicity; involving both ethnic and political factors. Jenne takes a more categorical view of the concept of ethno-politics as an intractable conflict between two or more groups which are influenced by deep personal or group identity.<sup>3</sup> He argues out that these social categories are based on cultural disagreements that are normally resistant to resolutions.

Ethno-politics occur in both open and closed societies. Citizens form interest groups to either lobby for policies or protest government actions.<sup>4</sup> Political parties are formed in democratic governments to advance party agendas and to openly contest for political power. It is within the parties that non-governmental demands are articulated, autonomy is sought and legitimacy of issues raised by states are challenged. According to Birnir, ethno-politics is an interactive concept that shapes party systems and that which requires effective policies and reforms.<sup>5</sup> He therefore maintains that handling necessary regime transformation in a do-or-die situation requires compromise from leaders.

Kenya is a developing country with a less open system in which assertiveness of ethno-political agendas engage various levels of political violence. A look at how Kenya's policy has evolved since that time of border issue and the maritime dispute, the move to act decisively has been to protect Kenya's territorial and political integrity. In the national security interest of Kenya, the country's future is in strapping credible

<sup>1</sup> Charles Ragin, review of *Review of Ethnopolitics: A Conceptual Framework*, by Joseph Rothschild, *American Journal of Sociology* 88, no. 6 (1983): 1317-19.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph R. Rudolph, "The Significance of Ethno-Politics in Modern States and Society," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Ethnicity*, ed. Steven Ratuva (Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2019), 149-67, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-2898-5\\_13](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-2898-5_13).

<sup>3</sup> Erin K. Jenne, "Is Nationalism or Ethnopolitics on the Rise Today?," *Ethnopolitics* 17, no. 5 (October 20, 2018): 546-52, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2018.1532635>.

<sup>4</sup> Romana Korez-Vide, "INFLUENCING BY MEANS OF CULTURE IN CONTEMPORARY INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS," n.d., 16.

<sup>5</sup> Arun R. Swamy and Johanna Birnir, "Review of Ethnicity and Electoral Politics, Birnir/Johanna," *The Journal of Politics* 70, no. 4 (2008): 1235-37, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0022381608081206>.

relationships for the nation. However, it is believed that regional prosperity is dependent on political integration of all the potential ethnicities, classes, cultures and states territories.<sup>6</sup> Kenya is an economic power for East Africa and its position in the turbulent Africa has fashioned it as an anchor state in regional peace and security. Its foreign policy orientation has also situated it as a regional leader and edged the country towards a more assertive policy position.

Previous government regimes were repressive in that opposition opinions were unwanted and were considered potentially fatal.<sup>7</sup> Kenya's position of non-alignment faced serious territorial challenges which began with shifter insurrection in north frontier districts. Border disputes have continued and have remained unresolved since then because there is not much willingness by the state to comply with the 1964 legal instrument adopted by the OAU. However, with the recent handshake in Kenya, a new political order has been created and is dominating the country's political space of coherence and experience. The less open system of Kenya is not inclined towards accommodative policies. It comprises of a political elite who belong to variety of different associations and that which carry multiple identities in terms of tribe, age, gender, class, social status, religion and philosophies of life such as the dynasties.

### III. THE PUZZLED INTRACTABILITY OF PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

Public Diplomacy means different things to different audiences and no single approach will work for every situation, message or government. The challenges rely on measuring outcome in terms of who we reach, how we reach them and how we measure both success and failure. According to Costas and Sharp, Diplomacy is a peaceful pursuance of foreign policy objectives with biggest view picture of activities.<sup>8</sup> They believe in an interestingly focussed process by which messages get delivered. A preserve of the great statesman during crisis, PD challenge is not getting what states want, but communicating it. It lies in what states are prepared to do or give in order to get what they want. Triggered by questions for whom and for what purpose, issues of PD are no longer government centred.

Public diplomacy is a process of harvest of the many benefits of collective individuation, community outreach and cultural

loyalty through hearts-to-hearts meeting of people.<sup>9</sup> While critics advocates that individual calculations of interests leads to beneficial national outcomes, Realists such as Morgenthau and Herz undermines the reign of reason, stating that individuals do not always make rational utility-maximizing decisions.<sup>10</sup> They question the liberal embrace of reason with a view that domestic politics demand a public attention for a country to experience improvement in its internal affairs. Most governments are not comfortable with supporting their own policies' critical views, moreover, in situations where citizens are not only spectators to the process, but also opponents of state actions, reconciliation of critical divergent issues remains a nightmare. This is because emotions and external factors such as conflicts affect the making of optimal decisions.<sup>11</sup>

International terrorism challenged the world with so many cases and multiple deaths. Heavy damages were inflicted in every economy. Capacity of governments to respond were put to test and more vulnerable countries who had already made progress were being reversed. New international security agenda emerged which were aimed at restructuring societies.<sup>12</sup> Of particular potential to the then pressing challenges, countries fought to maintain their purpose, vision and vigour for better future. Wiser and stronger re-emergence were the only option for clean and inclusive future. The crisis evolved to financial and development challenges as countries were going through painful and slow economic recovery. Capacities to access financial markets were lost. Governments, UN Agencies, private financial institutions were all struggling to service debts with revised budgets. The increased price of debts and limited access to finances restrained achievement of sustainable goals.<sup>13</sup> Grass-root attacks dislocated poor economies and the shocks undermined the capacity of emerging economies in almost all sectors of development.<sup>14</sup>

Different skills and strategies are essential for proper execution of PD. It is essential in regions where economic or political interdependence is eminent and where civil society interconnectedness is valued. In circumstances where a state want to influence domestic publics in an increasingly fluid internal networks within the realities of domestic relations, it has to renew its attention and move away from one-way

<sup>6</sup> Boyka Stefanova, "Between Ethnopolitics and Liberal Centrism: The Movement for Rights and Freedoms in the Mainstream of Bulgarian Party Politics," *Nationalities Papers* 40, no. 5 (September 2012): 767–82, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2012.705268>.

<sup>7</sup> Shilaho Westen Kwatamba, "Ethnicity and Political Pluralism in Kenya," *Journal of African Elections* 7, no. 2 (October 1, 2008): 77–112, <https://doi.org/10.20940/JAE/2008/v7i2a4>.

<sup>8</sup> "Costas\_m-\_constantinou\_pauline\_kerr\_paul\_sharpb-Ok-Org.Pdf," accessed December 2, 2020, [https://professorbellreadings.files.wordpress.com/2017/10/costas\\_m-\\_constantinou\\_pauline\\_kerr\\_paul\\_sharpb-ok-org.pdf](https://professorbellreadings.files.wordpress.com/2017/10/costas_m-_constantinou_pauline_kerr_paul_sharpb-ok-org.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> Joseph S. Nye, "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (2008): pp. 94–109, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716207311699>.

<sup>10</sup> Steve Smith, Amelia Hadfield, and Timothy Dunne, *Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases* (Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>11</sup> Catherine H. Zuckert, "On the 'Rationality' of Rational Choice," *Political Psychology* 16, no. 1 (1995): 179–98, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3791455>.

<sup>12</sup> Shaun Riordan, "Dialogue-Based Public Diplomacy: A New Foreign Policy Paradigm?," in *The New Public Diplomacy*, ed. Jan Melissen (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2005), 180–95, [https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230554931\\_10](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230554931_10).

<sup>13</sup> "Merickova - OBSTACLES TO PUBLIC DIPLOMACY.Pdf," accessed December 8, 2020, [http://www.culturaldiplomacy.org/academy/content/pdf/participant-papers/2013-12-annual/Obstacles\\_To\\_Public\\_Diplomacy\\_Laura\\_Merickova.pdf](http://www.culturaldiplomacy.org/academy/content/pdf/participant-papers/2013-12-annual/Obstacles_To_Public_Diplomacy_Laura_Merickova.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> Michael H. Creswell, "Wasted Words? The Limitations of U.S. Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 42, no. 5 (May 4, 2019): 464–92, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2017.1392097>.

information flow.<sup>15</sup> Melissen argues that governments tend to peddle information to foreigners as a strategy to keep off external press. He asserts that giving local citizens free engagement grounds with the foreign audience makes it easy for states to establish beyond opinion gatekeepers a link with non-state actors. Such an approach will always give rise to external collaboration among citizens.

When a nation's public diplomacy is closely tied to its FP objectives, efforts to achieve its intended goals are often left to chance.<sup>16</sup> A good PD should then be tuned to both medium and long term objectives and intentions. It is therefore vital for actors who intend to cross over cultures to broaden their focus and remain open in their agendas. Information received by the publics is not always as intended because the officials are treated with suspicion and viewed as moral hazard agents. With the help of non-state actors and local networks in target countries, PD is made more effective.<sup>17</sup>

Although there is limited understanding of the link between soft power and PD, the world has been experiencing an increase in professional diplomats operating independently of state agencies. Governments lack enhanced programs of exchange, display poor public-private collaborations and exhibit inflexible non-rapid response to crisis situations.<sup>18</sup> Hocking advocates for decentralization of intergovernmental relations, chain building in public diplomacy and engagements with the publics. In an information society, communications that acknowledge contributions from diverse range of actors largely develop constructive management to complex problems. For example, the Ottawa landmine process, the Global Witness of British, De Beers' establishment of diamond regime among others.<sup>19</sup> Coercive use of public diplomacy in pursuit of policy objectives face difficulties in delivering effective coherent information. Sometimes inability to penetrate global information flow rotates as a game of image dissonance in the diplomacy of sovereignty-free actors.

Public diplomacy efforts requires expansion, refining and coordination. Proliferation of information flow and lack of domestic constituencies by diplomats who never emphasize on the outreach activities reflect negatively on image management.<sup>20</sup> Livingstone addresses the need by governments to embrace and voice-in the global wilderness. Echoed by Cohen, the agent of comprehension has to move from old – new

roles. Diplomacy has to brave both interpretive and unified mechanisms of cultural boundaries.<sup>21</sup>

Power of diplomats is falling into decline and is no longer deemed credible. There is a rapid erosion of traditional secret diplomacy by the blend of both ICT and increase in number of non-state actors.<sup>22</sup> Ham proposes the selling of national ideas by the general public from the grassroots and local villages. Most of African countries rely on the national elite for advancement of interests and always view citizens as misinformed individuals who try to halt the unidirectional arrow of diplomatic progress. Cases of confrontations with violent hatred against each other group and everything they stand for are rampant within Africa. A look at the Xenophobic South Africa and Nigeria's retaliation are exposing governments' disabilities in serving the people. Failure to take the political and cultural views of others into account during the formulation and communication of own policies make it difficult for actors to have their actions understood better and more effectively accepted. Most African states have lost monopoly of processing and diffusing information because in their interactions with the wider public, networked approaches are neither preferred nor adopted.<sup>23</sup> When a country's culture are not in agreement and always clash, culturally filtered communications get distorted within a society. Failures of a "one-size fits all" type of PD occur in situations when there is lack of focus on both what is said and how it is heard.<sup>24</sup> Most governments condescend and ignore their publics thus they lack successful and convictive efforts towards sceptical foreign populace on policy and benevolence standards.<sup>25</sup>

Small countries with weak niches for imposition of policies lack necessities and incentives needed to generate meaningful gains from specified concentrated resources.<sup>26</sup> Elusive unpredictable challenges from publics not only require change management but well calculated strategies and ability to mobilize support at a daunting speed. Taking into account the changing fabrics in transnational relations, states and non-state actors should adapt to the multiple changes in the expanding international society and increase their assertive participation in international politics.<sup>27</sup>

Huge task still lies ahead even after Kenya opened its high commission in Islamabad, Pakistan. Kenya's Public diplomacy has evolved to the promotion of positive image. It is

<sup>15</sup> Jan Melissen, *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Riordan, Shaun. "Dialogue-Based Public Diplomacy: a New Foreign Policy Paradigm?" *The New Public Diplomacy*, 2005, 180–95. [https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230554931\\_10](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230554931_10).

<sup>18</sup> Brian Hocking, "Catalytic Diplomacy: Beyond 'Newness' and 'Decline,'" *Innovation in Diplomatic Practice*, 1999, pp. 21-42, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-27270-9\\_2..](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-27270-9_2..)

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Sonia Livingstone, "New Media, New Audiences?," *New Media & Society* 1, no. 1 (1999): pp. 59-66, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444899001001010>.

<sup>21</sup> Raymond Cohen, "Reflections on the New Global Diplomacy: Statecraft 2500 Bc to 2000 Ad," *Innovation in Diplomatic Practice*, 1999, pp. 1-18, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-27270-9\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-27270-9_1).

<sup>22</sup> Peter Van Ham, "Power, Public Diplomacy, and the Pax Americana," *The New Public Diplomacy*, 2005, pp. 47-66, [https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230554931\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230554931_3).

<sup>23</sup> Simon Anholt, "Beyond the Nation Brand: The Role of Image and Identity in International Relations," *Brands and Branding Geographies*, n.d., <https://doi.org/10.4337/9780857930842.00027>.

<sup>24</sup> Peter Van Ham, "Power, Public Diplomacy, and the Pax Americana," *The New Public Diplomacy*, 2005, pp. 47-66, [https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230554931\\_3](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230554931_3).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Gareth Evans, "Foreword: Indonesia, Australia And The World," *Indonesia Rising*, 2012, p. xv-xviii, <https://doi.org/10.1355/9789814380416-0>

<sup>27</sup> Jan Melissen, *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).



transforming conditions for projecting its power by garnering and shaping public opinion of other states such as Uganda's perceived authoritarian government. Despite foreign leaders being amiable and welcoming, negative perceptions from the publics and even parliamentary organizations will always limit a county's scope of influence.

The winning story in any relation carries with it a force for good when thinking through issues. Face to face communications or people-people diplomacy should not be put out of sight at the back seat, but because it explains to the relations the kind of people we really are, it must occupy the driving seat with focus on credible shared values. Where does the Kenya public diplomacy sit? Has Kenya's public diplomacy embraced people-people exchanges and tailored it towards specific tasks in the realization of national interests?

Kenya government is believed to have failed to crumble to political constraints from external regimes for profits. Nye's paradox of plenty emphasizes that no matter how good an advertisement is, it cannot sell an unwelcomed idea in a political environment where attention is scarce. When policy and diplomacy match, the culturally sensitive and linguistically skilled connections across the boarders get reinforced by effective face to face communications.<sup>28</sup>

Soft power of a state primarily rests on cultural, political and foreign policy resources.<sup>29</sup> The attraction component in which it lives up to its internal and external citizens will strive to legitimize its moral authority. Confusion will be the end result when citizens or populous become overwhelmed by the volume of information accessed. This kind of situation leads to scarcity of attention from leaders who are also unable to distinguish valuable background information gained.<sup>30</sup>

The changing social demands and rapid growth of Kenyans operating in neighbouring countries call for cooperation and coordination between governments in solving different questions. Public diplomacy, just like security does not exist in a vacuum and as societies change so too does PD.<sup>31</sup> For example, institutions in Kenya, Tanzania, south Sudan and Uganda majoring in communication, banking and education should develop proactive roles in re-modelling traditional methods. They should adjust to new conditions, reinvent and strengthen themselves in all levels. Traditionally, the public was taken for granted and their views on foreign policy formulation and implementation were regarded as necessary evil to the process. Moreover, Kenyan government has done very little in defining citizens' roles and functions within its PD

framework. Customarily, public citizens have ended up as spectators to the process and execution of policies.<sup>32</sup>

Government is always mistrusted and this has made it difficult for Kenya to exploit diplomatic niche in the enhancement of its image and role in the Diasporas. Even though Kenya's FP is anchored on interlinked pillars of diplomacy, its new waves of innovation and economic growth are not strong and durable enough to link local relations. The sour political background is filled with fervent nationalists who are hard-boiled. The ordinary citizens cannot differentiate between unilateral propaganda and nation-branding or cultural relations and public diplomacy. Hawkish politicians, media and military personnel are dumping nationalism and creating tension in the relationships. The political relations at the top stay half-hearted to highlighting the power of citizen exchanges. Hoping to build influence overseas; should Kenya then adopt a no-hierarchy model to connect talents inside borders to like-minded minds abroad? Bearing in mind that public diplomacy is developed through ideas, values and people's involvement, can the government empower private citizens to go global and be better positioned to reap the rewards of information economy?

When a country is wrestling with unapologetic messages, how information is handled, how risks are managed and how performances are evaluated are determined by the level of responsiveness and flexibility of government in question.<sup>33</sup> Governments find it difficult in explaining to people what PD means, why it is important and because such governments lack senior officials with the required skills, they are unable to have fruitful conversation with their people on what government does and why it does what it does. Most governments therefore fail to identify appropriate vision to put forward to citizens who feel empowered<sup>34</sup> with information warfare and visions resonating with audiences.

Shadows of PD such as propaganda were designed to get to the concerns of audience with a one way flow of information. The remorseful two-way form of PD could not change the transmitter or engage persons. It was not an easy task to see PD lead to happier solutions in the conflicting situation. Even though attempts were made to understand the problem, explaining Kenya's motive encountered a stumbling block and the levels of transparency in PD could not be well communicated into any viable vision. A good PD is about empowerment and reflection of a country in a better way. When an internal conflict arise, every action or communication has a potential to take life on its own and the represented wide-variety of interests are made aware across the government.

<sup>28</sup> Joseph S. Nye, "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (2008): pp. 94-109, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716207311699>.

<sup>29</sup> Fomina, Marina, and Olga Borisenko. "Strategy Cultural Resources Chinese Version of "Soft Power"." *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 2015. doi:10.5901/mjss.2015.v6n5s3p184.

<sup>30</sup> Joseph S. Nye, "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (2008): pp. 94-109, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716207311699>.

<sup>31</sup> Christer Jönsson and Martin Hall, "The Study of Diplomacy," *Essence of Diplomacy*, 2005, doi: 10.1057/9780230511040\_2.

<sup>32</sup> Snow, Nancy. "Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy." 2008. doi:10.4324/9780203891520.

<sup>33</sup> Hervé Maupeu, "Revisiting Post-Election Violence," *Les Cahiers d'Afrique de l'Est / The East African Review*, no. 38 (April 1, 2008): 193-230.

<sup>34</sup> Takashi Yamano, Yuki Tanaka, and Raphael Gitau, "Haki Yetu (It's Our Right): Determinants of Post-Election Violence in Kenya," *Discussion Paper*, n.d., 35.

For a government to involve local citizens in the implementation of any government program, support from local community leaders is crucial.<sup>35</sup> However, in any credible exchange, what matters is not agreement but understanding the conflict or the issues of contention.<sup>36</sup> The local link or communal blood pushes territorial politics for future beneficiaries in fighting to avoid extinction in the international arena. According to Jenkins, the presence of innate goodness that trickles down to all society balances the peaceful community life against the interests of governments whose tools break under pressure.<sup>37</sup> In some cases, community rights such as sound social engineering, preservation of mixed communities, defending of the poor against rapacious market communities and reasonable continuity of settlement, get evoked.

It was crucial for Kenya to attain soft power and have 2007 election coordinated and information spread through as many media channels and many languages as possible. The conflict was founded on the premise that distrust and ethnic enmity along tribal lines was either due to too little, or wrong information about election results.<sup>38</sup> When Post-Election Violence occurred, the general Kenyan opinion was that the conflicts were due to disputes of election results; arisen from a lack of knowledge as to which party won the 2007 presidential elections.<sup>39</sup>

#### IV. FACES OF ETHNO-POLITICS IN KENYA

Security crisis has put the world in a collective action-defining moment. Global mechanisms aimed at peace and security reforms are prioritizing on conflict prevention and peace building.<sup>40</sup> Threats to international Peace and Security pose risks to international cooperation and global development. The emergence of these threats calls for new and refreshing voices in standing up for collective actions and for global progress.<sup>41</sup> In sustaining an international security system void of major conflicts and widespread wars, liberal international economy remains a necessary factor.<sup>42</sup> Resting on arguments that connect economic structures to the use of force, a liberal economic system discourages the use of force among states and the responsibility to protect. Pace and unpredictability of the world system is therefore demonstrated by the changes in leadership and direction of individual state systems.<sup>43</sup>

When focussing on peace and security threats, greater attention has to be on social identity. A number of related issues such as

terrorism, radicalization, maritime disputes, food security, human rights and immigration are threats since they involve different actors and stretch across the globe. These issues call for strategic leadership, collaborations and partnerships. Diplomacy is experiencing challenges from new agendas of counter-terrorism and counter-radicalization. These challenges are taking form of networked organizations with structures which mirror some of the changes taking place in the world economy.<sup>44</sup> Terrorism is shaking the international system. However, for cooperation and collaborations to effectively confront security issues, a country requires support from grass root movements, empowered citizens and private sectors with bold moves.

International system is experiencing an increase in the numbers of human rights violations both regionally and globally.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, need arises to eliminate the deficiencies and create a new perspective of world peace and security. The world has seen a decline in global freedom, political and civil liberties.<sup>46</sup> With no progress being made on gender equality, global movements are exposing the scale and severity of girls and women discrimination and violence.<sup>47</sup> Consequently, as conflict and natural disasters continue to affect development of peace and security, humanitarian crises are getting severe.

Confronting conflicts from non-stable neighbours and overflow of terrorist activities across borders have made Kenya an operation theatre for terrorists, a scenario that has injured Kenya's efforts in projecting and promoting its foreign policy. Determination, assessment and success of foreign policy in foreign relations are based on good foundation laid by diplomacy. Kenya thumbed a series of stale consensus behind a package of policies that kept failing. The September eleven terrorist bombing in Nairobi and that of Israeli hotel in Kikambala left Kenya's public diplomacy in political shambles. Previously, Kenya was held high within Africa after its key roles in appeasing its neighbours. The signing of Sudan Peace Agreement at Nyayo National Stadium in January 2005 leveraged its position and made it the guarantor of Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). The Somali negotiations in Eldoret and Mbagathi Kenya are just a few if to mention elements of dawned public diplomacy by Kenyan Government that were postponed.

<sup>35</sup> Prijbadi, Yanwar. "Village Politics." *Islam, State and Society in Indonesia*, 2018, 179–205. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315473697-7>.

<sup>36</sup> Jenkins, Simon. "What Next Out of Africa?" *Negotiating South Africa's Future*, 1989, 83–88. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-11328-6\\_10](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-11328-6_10).

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Yamano, Tanaka, and Gitau, "Haki Yetu (It's Our Right): Determinants of Post-Election Violence in Kenya."

<sup>39</sup> Maupeu, "Revisiting Post-Election Violence."

<sup>40</sup> Barry Buzan, "New Patterns of Global Security in the Twenty-First Century," *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 67, no. 3 (1991): 431–51, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2621945>.

<sup>41</sup> Buzan.

<sup>42</sup> Barry Buzan, "Economic Structure and International Security: The Limits of the Liberal Case," *International Organization* 38, no. 4 (1984): 597–624.

<sup>43</sup> Chris Brown, "The Emerging Shape of 21st Century International Politics," in *Understanding International Relations [4th Ed.]*, ed. Chris Brown and Kirsten Ainley (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 294–321, <http://www.palgrave.com/>.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> David P. Forsythe, "Human Rights in International Relations," Higher Education from Cambridge University Press (Cambridge University Press, August 18, 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316874929>.

<sup>46</sup> Valerie M. Hudson and Christopher S. Vore, "Foreign Policy Analysis Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow," *Mershon International Studies Review* 39, no. 2 (1995): 209–38, <https://doi.org/10.2307/222751>.

<sup>47</sup> Council on Foreign Relations, "Advancing Gender Equality in Foreign Policy" (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep29911>.

Kenya's experience with ethno-politics have been as a result of power and resource competition.<sup>48</sup> The 1992, 1997/8 and the 2007/8 all happened after the emergence of multi-party politics in the country. Political parties' alignment are based on ethnicity and not political ideology or party policies. While there have been tribal favoritisms in voting patterns of ethnic census in every election, historical colonial use of divide and rule has beset cooperation between communities. Consequently, political institutions have been weakened through constitutional amendments.<sup>49</sup> The 1963-1978 Kenyatta's reign was marred with ethnic alienation and undemocratic policies which banned unity among politicians. This was followed by the Moi's autocratic rule which awakened Kenyan's to the realization of the effects of one-party. In reaction to the regime, unsuccessful coup d'état attempt was carried out against the government. Moreover, the 2002 Mwai Kibaki and Raila's multiparty ended up in acrimonious relationship after one of the Parties felt that the Memorandum of Association was dishonored.

Ethno-politics has been and is still influencing daily events of nations across the world. It continues to shape history of societies and countries. Throughout the world, ethnic identity forms the basis of self-determination and destabilization of states.<sup>50</sup> Kenya's domestic political climate got a new definition after the 2007/08 PEV. It played a major role in blocking a democratic civic leadership. The constant protests after every election natured dilemma for many countries dealing with Kenya, a country whose foreign policy determinants were unknown to non-state actors. The country's policy execution was largely impacted on by the then implored decision making processes, state interest, government leaders capabilities, perceptions and their role conceptions.<sup>51</sup> The then ethno-political movement in Kenya was authority focused and that which challenged the nature of the constitutional regime and definition of Kenya's political community.

The mobilizing factor behind the 2007/08 PEV was majorly politics and identity manifestation was tribal, language oriented and aligned to social class. Politicians effectively command constant tribal loyalty from citizens who embrace ethnic-based civic society with shared political culture and identity.<sup>52</sup> Rooted in an ethnically distinct community, political parties with collective histories maintain regular contacts aimed at fostering a sense of ethnic identity. According to Fontana, politics is influenced by both ethnic cultures and religion. He argues out that political differences intensifies conflict.<sup>53</sup> In the struggle

for influence, politics become territorial either by language, religion or ethnic. Divisions in a society tend to order issues and control government systems.

Shaken by 2007/08 ethnic division, Kenyan politics, government decisions and national budget were shaped. Politics of division encroached into the system as parties placed their faith in groups perceived to map and re-draw ethnic demands for self-determinations. At the initial stages of conflict, the period was marred with divisiveness. Ethnic identity was shaping national politics and communities reacted negatively to attempts that were directed towards ethnic unity. Government was forced to adopt policies and commit itself. Ethnic minorities joined others to collectively lobby for change and push their demands. Even though opposition tried to dilute government authority, parties did not find receptive audience because their demands were viewed as illegitimate by government decision-makers. Meanwhile, as Kenyan ethno-class were having presence in policy execution and decision-making arenas, the judiciary succumbed to their practices. Tailor-made policy formulation and implementation systems enhanced ethno-political influence and advanced interests of contesting parties.<sup>54</sup>

The period was later marred with authority-focused demands which were geared towards power sharing arrangements. This was aimed at restoring Kenya's democratic government after the PEV. Policies were paralysed and the country went into a political limbo. Meanwhile, institutional engineering took a different turn to pursue demands and search for a perfect polity which could change government regime. Despite its successful imposition by Kofi Annan's mediation, decision making was not always collective.

## V. NEGOTIATION OF ETHNO-POLITICAL DEMANDS IN KENYA

Negotiating ethno-political demands during a conflict is not an easy task. While recognizing the changing framework and what it subsumes, public diplomacy explains the roots of strategies and expectations which might differ, conflict or pursue different aims and objectives of actors. Unconscious of the power of conventional wisdom or of direct public involvement, states overlook the ordinary citizens and voluntary associations, forgetting that they are the main sources of peaceful initiatives.<sup>55</sup> Hocking emphasized the presence and purpose of scope offered to individuals for direct action in

<sup>48</sup> Rok Ajulu, "Politicised Ethnicity, Competitive Politics and Conflict in Kenya: A Historical Perspective," *African Studies* 61, no. 2 (December 1, 2002): 251–68, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0002018022000032947>.

<sup>49</sup> Michael Otieno Kisaka and Israel Nyaburi Nyadera, "Ethnicity and Politics in Kenya's Turbulent Path to Democracy and Development," *Sosyal Siyaset Konferansları Dergisi/Journal of Social Policy Conferences*, July 17, 2019, 159–80, <https://doi.org/10.26650/jspc.2019.76.0002>.

<sup>50</sup> Florian Bieber, "Is Nationalism on the Rise? Assessing Global Trends," *Ethnopolitics* 17, no. 5 (October 20, 2018): 519–40, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2018.1532633>.

<sup>51</sup> I William Zartman, "The Timing of Peace Initiatives: Hurting Stalemates and Ripe Moments," *Global Review of Ethnopolitics* 1, no. 1 (September 1, 2001): 8–18, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14718800108405087>.

<sup>52</sup> Jana Krause, "Stabilization and Local Conflicts: Communal and Civil War in South Sudan," *Ethnopolitics* 18, no. 5 (October 20, 2019): 478–93, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2019.1640505>.

<sup>53</sup> Giuditta Fontana, "Does Education Help the Transition out of Power-Sharing in Plural Societies? A Comparative Study," *Ethnopolitics* 20, no. 4 (August 8, 2021): 385–405, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2019.1595909>.

<sup>54</sup> Dominic Mutuku, Annah-Grace Kemunto, and Maureen Wanja, "Ethnicity and Ethnic Politics in Kenya: Policy Gaps Analysis," Africa Portal (Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA), March 31, 2020), <https://www.africaportal.org/publications/ethnicity-and-ethnic-politics-kenya-policy-gaps-analysis/>.

<sup>55</sup> Brian Hocking, "Rethinking the 'New' Public Diplomacy," *The New Public Diplomacy*, 2005, pp. 28–43, [https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230554931\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230554931_2).



international affairs. However, internal political party demands are beneficial to individual parties.

Generally, in situations where violence is ethnic motivated, it becomes difficult to control the overall political process. Not only is Kenya lacking press attaché's in its embassies but it outsources communications with foreign audiences to International Public Relations agencies,<sup>56</sup> an issue that has raised questions regarding competency of its own citizens. For better post conflict institutional building in a power-sharing situation where parties seek greater control of affairs, co-opting support of ethno-political groups is the only less expensive approach. However, with the emergence of global society that operates independently of state actors, Communication Information Technology (CIT) revolution is rapidly empowering individuals and groups.<sup>57</sup>

Kenya's channel of information leaves a lot to be desired as there is no government spokesperson to link with the locals and foreign grassroots. The environment for individual transactions is disabled. Consequently, with the loss of diplomatic confidentiality during negotiations, publicity has moved from conventional elite to boundless mass-market. The move is majorly influencing actions of domestic public and targeting audience who are not familiar with the actor's ideals and values. Due to flood of global communications, state actors are unable to determine and regulate the flow of information to the public. Addictive and hard to escape sticky power is defining PD of most developing states.<sup>58</sup> According to Nye, attractive power is rooted in cultures, ideas and values meant to encourage others to want what you want. It was therefore not easy to merge the minimum gains that different political parties could accept with maximum points of compromise by the then Kenyan ruling party.

Increasing the visibility of the ordinary individual in PD enactment makes it easy for nations to address grass root issues and concerns of ordinary citizens. The world is experiencing an explosive growth of non-state actors. Their influence especially with the rise of soft power and access to information require different mind-set from the traditional tactics. Development and evolution of PD has seen emergence of independent observers who are virtually connected and are playing key roles in influencing both domestic and international opinions. Hesitant to offer demands for fear of escalation, the centralised government administration not only disapproved of devolution of government structures but also it did not allow local government to make laws to local conditions.

Local politics is both politically and culturally influential. It is a battleground for influence, a source of basic-level power with complex relationships in building reputations, networks and

influence.<sup>59</sup> For a government that undermine villagers' democracy and independence, a culture of resistance is formed within the villages. One thing worse than a bitter enemy is an imprudent friend and if the citizens decide to be quiet, to carry their own initiatives and to ignore the government, agendas pushing remains a nightmare. In 2007/08, ethno-political tensions were high because the system was perceived to be favouring the interests of one party. This propelled the parties towards undemocratic courses of action that led to violence.

Failure to take into consideration both the traditional and consensual niching advantages lead to a disjointed identity often full of political partisanship. For small countries like Kenya, maintaining maximum possible flexibility becomes a challenge. Highest possible economic and political market awareness were just but impossible dreams. Political quarrels as a result of what was happening escalated the conflict to the arena of decision makers. It is sometimes not easy to remain genuine and trustworthy in eyes of the public even if the state is internally anchored and attractive to the target market.

Borrowing from Barbara Ehrenreich's 2008 post on the 'unstoppable Obama', the speech was a true reflection of Kenya's PD. From what she connotes, failure by states and non-state actors to actively listen and convince are signs of negligence. Kenya has neither understood its audiences nor taken up steps to be understood in angles which could correct the disturbing stereotypical images among publics.<sup>60</sup> In the initial stages of PEV conflict, political parties stonewalled moderate bargainers who pressed ethno-political agendas of peace and unity. It became difficult to find a middle ground when internal conflict management devices failed. Since both sides believed they were right, ethnic conflict was getting ugliest and the country became the subject of international intervention.

A cross analysis at Nye's notion of Soft Power, during violent conflicts, funnelled top-down information communication by the national authorities with non-state actors form message targets.<sup>61</sup> In Kenya, there were networked models of mutually dependent cooperation and who shared political questions and persuaded attainment of their varied mutual interests. Public Diplomacy was then, a tool controlled by the national authorities.<sup>62</sup> Irrevocable things happened as the conflict took a horrific toll on the lives of Kenyans which were lost, people and families were displaced and lives disrupted.

Civilian population in Kenya became distrustful of all forms of information that was easily accessed and was regarded as propaganda. Public Diplomacy practitioners had to live up to five major criteria. First, they had to work towards gaining recognition by the target groups to depict themselves.

<sup>56</sup> Nangira Namano, *Ethno Politics in Kenya. What Can Be Done to Transform Ethnic Conflicts in Kenya?* Grin Verlag, (2017).

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Joseph S. Nye, "Hard, Soft, and Smart Power," *Oxford Handbooks Online*, January 2013, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199588862.013.0031>.

<sup>59</sup> Pribadi, Yanwar. "Village Politics." *Islam, State and Society in Indonesia*, 2018, 179–205. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315473697-7>.

<sup>60</sup> Barbara Ehrenreich, "Unstoppable Obama," *The Huffington Post*, February 14, 2008

<sup>61</sup> Joseph S. Nye, "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (2008): pp. 94–109, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716207311699>.

<sup>62</sup> Cynthia P. Schneider, "Culture Communicates: US Diplomacy That Works," in *The New Public Diplomacy*, ed. Jan Melissen (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2005), 147–68, [https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230554931\\_8](https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230554931_8).

Secondly, they had to portray willingness to listen to, and openness towards critics or opponents. Third, they had to show openness in addressing controversies in their policies from the target groups. Forth, the practitioners had to learn to avoid too many contradictions within the collective Policies that were. Lastly, they had to ensure consistency in message communication to both domestic and foreign publics.<sup>63</sup>

Widespread surprises existed among Kenyans over the degree of ethnic enmity which became apparent and soft power resources had to be promoted.<sup>64</sup> The mediators came in and assumed responsibility of spreading positive narratives about the 2007 election results. This included meetings with party leaders, the presidential candidates and even locals in the country. Their aim was to increase the trust towards the desired messages of peace.<sup>65</sup> The short term focus of PD was to stop the then violent conflict that marred the country's major towns and cities. Additionally, flagrant disregard for human rights was taking place with IDPs rapidly increasing in numbers and consequently destabilizing the region.

Expectations were that common policy communication strategy for Kenya nationals was to be established and had to be coherent with and able to continue with peace messages. Initially, the mediations had limited effect due to the fact that there was communication rift between the party leaders.<sup>66</sup> After the conflict, it only became more important for the leaders to spread the narrative of peace and good intentions to become more receptive towards advice provided. The two leaders then sought to depict common values within the nation. The political leaders chose to work together after a peaceful negotiation in a power-sharing government.

Conducted in practice, Public Diplomacy was then a newly interpreted strategic tool used in attaining soft power within new or more complex international landscape.<sup>67</sup> With an intention of increasing reputation even in a digitalised information age, PD had contributed to winning Cold War and could potentially contribute on winning civil war. Either as reinstated or a wholly interpreted concept, PD received civilization from the so called paradox of plenty.<sup>68</sup> The conflict threatened regional stability and the mediation offered a pathway to conflict resolution in form of diplomacy. And because power is created from ones persuasiveness provided in the configuration of information,<sup>69</sup> the Kofi Annan's negotiation oversaw democracy-building activity in Kenya.

The then national environment of the country was altered and PD in Kenya became a theme for national advisers within. This is the period in which selling of soft power to the political consumers in the country were taken as dreams and desires and in which the quest for effective PD rose and became a genuine

national phenomena. Practitioners were most conservative and could not come up with any universal national movement but ended up with moves they knew would be mostly supported amongst their growing national or ethnic crowd of followers. The Annan's mediation was successful in that the negotiations managed to abate and deflate the moments of ethno-political conflict.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Insights from various respondents show that ethnic, religion and ethno-political class have continued to haunt political relations in Kenya. Tribal warfare continues to infect the country. Consequently, management and accommodation of ethnic identities and sentiments have been challenging to Kenyan government regimes and they continue to shape its political economy.

Politics in Kenya is ethno-origin and is characterized by political parties inclined to different ideologies. The value of issue based politics has boiled down to citizens as voters and is diminishing. Communities' only concern is how they benefit from the parties. Coupled with a number of domestic obstacles to a country's internal peace-making process; preferences, stability and significance of domestic political actors all impact on ethnic persuasion, mobilization and cooperation.

The fragile 2007/8 Post-Election Violence environment failed to produce ethnic to ethnic negotiations. Internal Public diplomacy failed not only because of the unreceptive Kenyan population but because of political divisions within which created inconsistent messages. The violence unpacks an illumination of the paradox of public diplomacy and national security decision-making under the different regimes of governance. It is through Public Diplomacy that political leaders' differences and rivalry was overcame.

## VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Borrowing from Robert Putnam's concept of reverberation, Public Diplomacy is a tool by which governments through target communities seek to relax domestic constraints towards cooperation and create a national society. Kenya should therefore seek to embrace politics of ideologies with opportunity structures and mechanism that address discontent.

When cultures try to understand, communicate and respect each other, politics fosters a sense of community that gets people to talk to each other. Through this, in case of a misunderstanding, parties resolve to dialogue thereby leveraging the power of public diplomacy as a change agency. Mitigating against the domestic obstacles, every Kenyan citizen could be if given a chance be a public diplomat in healing the wounds of ethnic

<sup>63</sup> Jan Melissen, "Wielding Soft Power," n.d., 34.

<sup>64</sup> Susanne D. Mueller, "Dying to Win: Elections, Political Violence, and Institutional Decay in Kenya," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 29, no. 1 (January 2011): 99-117, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02589001.2011.537056>.

<sup>65</sup> "BBC - History: World Wars in-Depth," accessed February 26, 2021, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/>.

<sup>66</sup> Mueller, "Dying to Win."

<sup>67</sup> Daniel Solomon, "Pyramids of Peace: Violent Participation, Uncivil Society, and Localized Peacebuilding during Kenya's 2007-8 Post-Election Crisis," n.d., 11.

<sup>68</sup> Christopher Ross, "Public Diplomacy Comes of Age," *The Washington Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (2002): pp. 73-83, <https://doi.org/10.1162/01636600252820144>.

<sup>69</sup> HE Dr Amina Mohamed, "Kenya's Foreign Policy Priorities: Peace, Security and Prosperity," n.d., 5.



political conflicts. In the most responsible and ethical way, political communities must find out the most effective technique and strategy of telling their story to a particular community.

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