

TRIBAL POLITICS AND WHAT IT DOES TO INNOCENT CHILDREN

The political history of Kenya can date back to 1885, when the European powers first partitioned East Africa. In 1895, the United Kingdom established the East African Protectorate and, soon after, opened the fertile highlands especially the Rift Valley that belonged to the Kalenjin community to white settlers. The settlers were allowed representation in government even before it was officially made a U.K. colony in 1920, but Africans were prohibited from direct political participation.

In the late 1940's the Africans started resisting colonialism and between October 1952 and December 1959, Kenya was under a state of emergency, which was as a result of the tactical "Mau Mau" rebellion against British colonial government. Mau Mau was a militant African nationalist movement, which mainly consisted of members of the Kikuyu tribe. This was also the beginning of widespread political participation countrywide. Kenya gained independence on December 12, 1963 but the first direct elections for Africans to the (LEGCO) Legislative Council took place in 1957. Mzee Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya African National Union (KANU) and a Kikuyu by tribe became Kenya's first President during independence. The opposition party that was Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU), and was a coalition of smaller tribes dissolved itself and joined KANU in 1964. Most of the White settlers returned to their homeland and left lots of land in the fertile Rift valley, which Kenyatta gave to members of his Kikuyu tribe instead of returning it to the Kalenjins.

Adonijah Jaramogi Oginga Odinga a Luo by tribe who is the late father of Raila Odinga and Vice president to Kenyatta formed the opposition Kenya People's Union (KPU), in 1966. The party was banned shortly after and Jaramogi detained. Kenya became a single party state. Exit Jomo Kenyatta as a result of death and enter Daniel Toroitich Arap Moi who served as Kenyatta's Vice President. Moi was a dictator and hails from the Kalenjin community. He ruled Kenya with an iron fist from August 1978 to December 2002 and was an expert in silencing opposition critics and knew well how to defeat democracy. During his tenure the country experienced many political assassinations, the economy was run down and unemployment was at its highest. The ironical part of his tenure is that the country enjoyed relative peace.

In 1992 Section 2A of the constitution of Kenya was deleted and allowed pluralism of political parties. Elections were held in 1992 and 1997 that Daniel Moi easily won because many tribal political parties had been formed and it now became evident that one could become President of Kenya if only he/she comes from a big tribe or has the backing of big tribes, a game of numbers. In October 2002, a coalition of opposition parties joined forces with a faction that had broken away from KANU and formed the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC). In the same year, the NARC candidate, Mwai Kibaki, was elected the country's third President after receiving 62% of the vote. Apparently there was a memorandum of understanding between Kibaki's NAK and the runaway KANU faction led by Raila Odinga which was now called The Liberal democratic Party (LDP) on how

power was going to be shared thus the NARC coalition that saw Kibaki become president. Somewhere along the way, the LDP felt that it was being given a raw deal as far as the MOU was concerned and started playing the role of opposition within government. The faction successfully campaigned against a draft constitution that the government introduced and ensured that the government got a humiliating defeat in November of 2005 when Kenyan's went to the poll to vote in the referendum. President Kibaki however enjoyed high ratings amongst pollsters. Raila being a tactician recruited high profile members of most of the tribes in Kenya and formed the Orange democratic movement. Among the issues they had in mind for Kenya was "Majimbo" which means federalism as was actually stated by some of Raila's lieutenants. To most Kenyans, this meant that each person was to go back to the district/province where the tribe he/she belongs to hails from. Another of Raila's campaign strategy in the 2007 elections was to campaign against Kibaki and members of his tribe. Many of Raila's men openly used hate speech against the Kikuyu tribe. As a matter of fact leaflets were circulated in the Rift Valley especially in Langas area of Eldoret in July and August of 2007 informing members of tribes other than Kalenjin to vacate the area. Raila Odinga is a true leader and can lead Kenya to greater heights and he truly wants to be President of Kenya but unfortunately he is surrounded by leaders especially from the Rift Valley who disguised themselves in ODM but had a very dangerous ethnic cleansing agenda. A few nasty leaders also surround President Kibaki.

On 30th December 2007 President Kibaki was declared winner in the Presidential elections and this sparked off violence in ODM strongholds targeting members of the tribes that voted for Kibaki. Many have died as a result and more are still dying. Thousands were displaced and taken to refugee camps in safer towns like my hometown of Kisii. Life in these camps is pathetic. Women are being taken advantage of and end up giving their bodies for goodies. Children are really suffering. The government together with other donor agencies like the Red Cross are giving rations to the displaced families but these families say that this is not enough. The children in the Kisii camps have been registered at the District education office and will join local schools soon. It will take time before these children come to terms to what has happened to them and get used of living in the refugee camps. All the families in these camps fled without any material possessions. Some families lost members to the violence and are traumatized. I spoke to one 11 years old girl at one of the camps in Kisii and she had a sad story for me. She told me that their family resided at Nyalenda village in Kisumu and when violence erupted on that fateful day, she lost her elder brother who was 13 years old as their father watched. The young boy was held up side down and thrown into a pit latrine full of faecal matter and the father told by the crazy gang to flee or also face the same execution. The father quickly looked for the rest of his family and safely took them to the nearest police station where they were later transported to Kisii. They really do not know what happened to the remains of their loved one and say they will never go back to Kisumu. They belong to the Kisii tribe and have since traced relations where they now stay. This is an experience that will forever remain in their minds.

The way forward for Kenya is for President Kibaki and Honorable Raila Odinga to meet and explore the possibility of sharing power to save this beautiful country. Kibaki has nothing to lose, as this is his final term in office but if the madness that is the post election violence continues Raila will have everything to lose. The remedy to this situation is purely a local one but the international community can come in handy to advise the tribal politicians of Kenya. May God bless this beautiful country.

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