



NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE
NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY

INFORMED QUESTIONS PAPER
KENYA'S CULTURAL COMPLEXITY

THE GLOBAL SECURITY ARENA
Seminar C
Course 5604

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Class of 2003

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March 5, 2003

Report Documentation Page				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE 05 MAR 2003		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED 05-03-2003 to 05-03-2003	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Kenya's Cultural Complexity				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) National War College, 300 5th Avenue, Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, DC, 20319-6000				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release; distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES The original document contains color images.					
14. ABSTRACT see report					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 14	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

INFORMED QUESTIONS PAPER

KENYA CULTURAL COMPLEXITY

1. SURVIVING THE COLONIAL LEGACY

Before the era of British colonialism, East Africa was inhabited mainly by Africans living a traditional subsistence existence. No money economy existed and all exchanges of local production were on a barter basis. Outside trade with other societies was almost non-existent except for with coastal Asian and Arab traders. The coming of the European settlers and construction of the Uganda Railway at the beginning of the 20th century marked a major transition in Kenya. The settlers introduced plantation agriculture, the main crops including, coffee, tea, sisal, wheat and pyrethrum. The settlers also introduced livestock ranching. Africans were not allowed to engage in cash crop farming and the most productive lands were confiscated for the exclusive use of settlers. The settlers' plantation labor requirements were provided by impressing the local tribes. British administrators compelled Africans to work by ordering imposition of a head tax on all African heads of households. Africans were then forced to work for limited wages to pay this tax.

The colonial infrastructure was primarily intended to serve the colonial government and settler community. The colonial government developed a basic system of road, telephone and postal networks to link the railway line and facilitate the export of raw materials and basic commodities to Europe. Large numbers of Christian missionaries accompanied the settlers. Medical and educational facilities were created

primarily to serve the settler population. The nominal primary education offered Africans aimed to produce a low-level, unskilled labor force for the benefit of the colonial civil service, not to produce an educated, independent African individual.

The colonial system did not emphasize economic development for African peoples. However, towards the end of the colonial era, some more general economic development did get started. Africans were gradually permitted to grow a limited amount of cash crops, such as coffee and tea, on marginal lands. African participation in the economy remained constrained while immigrants from India, Lebanon, Syria, Malaysia and China were introduced to fill middle level retail and mercantile trade roles. The commanding heights of the colonial economy was reserved for British colonials. Consequently, the African labor force was left basically unskilled, underpaid, and with limited prospects for their personal and family improvement.

- a) To what extent has Kenya succeeded in overcoming the negative impact of colonialism on the African community's participation in the broader economy?
- b) Did segregation of Africans from key economic roles create ethnic tension among non-African traders from Asia and the Middle East? Has such tension, to the extent that they exist, been overcome?
- c) What was the impact of intensive missionary activity over the last century on the nature of African culture and religious belief systems?
- d) Does the tourism industry provide more benefits than problems to the Kenya society and economy? What innovative strategies can be applied in this sector to generate more benefit to Kenya?
- e) Are there opportunities for Africans to attain senior management positions in the modern multinational corporations?

2. BENEFIT FROM KENYA'S RICH NATURAL ENDOWMENTS

Kenya is blessed with a rich variety of plants and animals -- one of the most prolific areas of biodiversity in the world -- allowing for a potentially wide range of economic, recreational and cultural activities. The Kenyan highlands contain very prolific agricultural regions and the Rift Valley savannas support abundant and varied wildlife. Kenya's natural resources include gold, limestone, soda ash, salt barites, rubies, fluorspar, garnets, wildlife and hydropower.

Issues affecting the natural environment and thus the quality of life include: water pollution from urban and industrial wastes; degradation of water quality from increased use of pesticides and fertilizers; water hyacinth infestation in Lake Victoria; deforestation; soil erosion; desertification; and poaching of wildlife, especially elephant and rhinoceros. Kenya suffers recurrent drought and flood cycles, exacerbated by the El Nino effect. Managing these issues will significantly impact the prospects for future development and social well-being.

The country is strategically located within easy reach by land, air and sea of markets in the region, Middle East, Europe and Asia. Kenya's economy is largely based on agriculture, which accounts for over one third of the GDP and approximately two thirds of exports. Agriculture is supplemented by manufacturing, commerce and tourism, which collectively account for an additional one-quarter of GDP. Government, however, is the single largest employer.

Kenya's economic growth rate significantly eroded in the 1990s. Inflation rose to 27.5%. Constitutional reforms reintroducing the multi-party political system generated economic uncertainty around general elections and their outcomes. Ethnic clashes and social instability accompanied political party activity in some parts of the country. This led to violence-induced economic disruption and a fall in the productivity of affected areas. During the same period, bad weather limited general production and as a consequence of these trends, the gross domestic product declined.

- a) What are the near-term prospects for the Kenyan economy? Are there expectations that the recent downward trends show any signs of reversal or improve?
- b) What impact will the recent election have on the link between political activity, uncertainty and economic performance? Does the election of the new government spark any hope of economic progress among the private sector community?
- c) What export sectors show the most promise for improving performance? What foreign markets are most accessible to Kenyan exports? What products have the most export potential?
- d) Since the terrorist attacks in recent years, has Kenya's tourism sector and related employment and revenue benefits been revived? How can this sector be made more dynamic while protecting its unique attractions and advantages? Is cultural tourism a sub-sector that has potential here?
- e) How important is environmental protection, conservation and maintenance to the new government? What are their priorities in this area?

3. MANAGING ETHNIC AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Kenya's cultural demography is both diverse and fragmented. It has a complex array of ancient cultures living side-by-side, all of whom are proud of preserving their heritages, values and traditions. Kenya has more than 70 ethnic groups with different languages and dialects, customs, beliefs and

lifestyles. The cultures of the coastal region developed independently without affecting the cultural development of the peoples inland. The latter were only of interest to the coastal dwellers as sources of slaves and ivory, the mainstays of the export trade along the coast.

There is also a number of American, European, Middle Eastern as well as South and East Asian immigrants that began coming to Kenya in the 19th century who add their own cultural ethos to the social mix in the country. Each distinct immigrant and indigenous group has its own traditional arts & crafts, architecture in homestead designs, clothing and jewelry, cuisine, social and economic activities, etc. There is a broad range of religious beliefs and practices that reinforce these culture-based traditions. The majority of Kenyans are Christians, but estimates for the percentage of population that adheres traditional African belief systems and to Islam vary widely. Religious affiliation: Protestant (45%); Roman Catholic (33%); Indigenous Beliefs (10%); Muslim (10%); Other (2%).

Some of the African ethnic tribes are large (e.g., the Agikuyu, or Kikuyu, who form a majority of the population, 22 percent). The other larger ethnic groups include the Luhya (14%), Luo (13%), Kamba (11%) and Kalenjin (12%). There are also ethnic/tribal groups that form very small populations, such as the tribe of El Molo. Kenya's ethnic groups are divided into three linguistic groups namely:

Bantu (e.g. Embu, Kamba (11%), Kikuyu, Kisii (6%), Luhya, Meru (6%), Kuria, Bukusu);

Nilotes (e.g. Luo, Iteso, Nandi, Kipsigis, Marakwet, Maasai);

Cushites (e.g. Boran, Rendille, Somali); and

Others (e.g. Swahili);

Non-Africans such as Europeans, Asians and Arabs represent only 1%.

Distinctions between many African ethnic groups have become blurred under the pressures of modernization and internal migration. Western cultural values have become more widely assimilated at the same time that many traditional cultures and their values and traditions are being lost.

The Kenyan population is 31,138,735 with a growth rate of 1.15 (2002 est.). The birth rate is 27.61 births per 1000 population, and the death rate is 14.68 deaths per 1000 (2002 est.). In terms of age structure, 41.1 percent are between the ages of 0 and 14 years; 56.1 percent are between 15 and 64; and 2.8 percent are 65 years or older. The infant mortality rate is estimated at 67.24 deaths per 1000 live births. The life expectancy at birth for the entire population is 47.02 years. The total fertility rate is 3.34 children born per woman. (Note: these numbers and estimates explicitly consider the impact of excess mortality due to HIV/AIDS and related opportunistic infections that can result in lower life expectancy, higher infant mortality and death rates, lower population and growth rates, and changes in the distribution of age and sex than would otherwise be the case.)

- a) Has Kenya successfully been able to assimilate its diverse tribal and ethnic groups into a shared sense of nationhood?
- b) Is tribal/ethnic identity a relevant factor in political party choice for most Kenyans?
- c) Have trends of rural to urban migration created special problems related to tribal/ethnic conflict?
- d) Is there resentment for the entrepreneurial and economic success of immigrant groups who thrive in this country? If so, how does that manifest itself?
- e) Is Kenya experience tension among Muslims and Christians in the current world environment which some describe as "a clash of cultures?"
- f) The number of people living with HIV/AIDS in Kenya is around 2.2 million; and more than 180,000 people have died of HIV/AIDS. What is Kenya doing to meet the challenges of the HIV/AIDS pandemic? What groups are most vulnerable to this disease?
- g) Are traditional tribal organizations and leadership system being employed to reinforce stability in local communities? How so?

4. ECONOMIC IMPACTS ON SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Most Kenyans live in rural areas, though urbanization is expanding rapidly due to internal migration to escape the economic stresses of rural life. Agriculture accounts for 24.5 percent of GDP. The agricultural sector has continued to decline in performance which is attributed mainly to the prolonged drought, tribal clashes that affected some parts of the country, power rationing, low prices for commodities and the high cost of agricultural inputs. However, the share of total employment in agriculture has declined substantially, from 40 per cent in 1990. This reflects largely the growth in other sectors such as manufacturing and trade, restaurants and hotels whose share of total employment rose from 8 per cent each in 1963, to 13 and 14 per cent, respectively, in 1990.

In 1996, total employment outside rural and pastoralist activities involved 4.3 million people. The number employed in the informal sector was 2,643,800 and accounted for 61% of total number of people employed. Those employed in the modern sector total 1,670,000. In 1963 the number of people employed in the modern sector of the economy was just about half a million. This number grew to nearly one and a half million in 1990.

Kenya has worked hard to reconcile diverse perspectives on development and health care as it determines how best to allocate limited resources. Despite advances in training, infrastructure, and technical development -- aided in part by Western funding, a vibrant private sector, and successful coalition building -- access to adequate employment opportunities, affordable education, health care remain issues for Kenya's predominantly rural population.

The Kenyan government sought to expand the level of access to educational opportunities to compensate from the limitations inherited from the colonial era. As a result of the expansion in education, Kenya now has a large pool of educated and skilled workers. In 1990, the country had 147,000 trained primary and secondary school teachers and 4,000 registered doctors and dentists. Expenditure on social services focuses on the education sub-sector, which accounted for 76% and 59% of the recurrent and development expenditure respectively.

Enrolment in all the four public universities by 1992/93 was 10,189. Teachers in both primary and secondary schools were 176,359 and 36,560 respectively. By 1996, primary and

secondary schools in the country had increased to 16,255 and 3,004 respectively. Enrolment at these two levels stood at 560,000 pupils and 658,000 students. The number of health facilities during the same period was 3,993.

Enrolment in the five public universities dropped by 7.0 percent from 43,591 in the 1997/98 academic year to 40,523 in 1998/99 academic year with 30.5 percent being female students. Enrolment in the four private universities increased by 6.6 percent to 3,888 in the 1998/99 academic year with female enrollment at 46.7 percent. The number of health institutions increased by 1.9 percent from 4,096 in 1997 to 4145 in 1998. Annual contribution to the National Social Security Fund decreased by 3.1 percent. Kenya's adult literacy rate exceeds 78 percent. More than 86 percent of men and 70 percent of women over the age of fifteen can read and write.

- a) What can be done to attract or direct more substantial investment and development into the rural sector to provide a basis for economic well-being and reduce rural-to-urban migration?
- b) Is providing adequate access for girls and women to participate in educational and professional opportunities a problem in Kenya? How so, if so?
- c) What is the degree of access to essential services available to rural and urban working class families?
- d) Are African entrepreneurs benefiting from the effort to promote micro-enterprises?
- e) What has been the impact of HIV/AIDS on the economy and labor force?
- f) Is Kenya benefiting from the U.S. African Growth and Opportunity Act? What can the U.S. do to help Kenya achieve more prosperity for its people?

5. DEBILITATING IMPACT OF CORRUPTION

According to Transparency International, Kenya suffers from high levels of official corruption in the public and private sectors as well as a dearth of political freedom. These ills bedevil the country, and their impact is implicated in the lack of social investment resulting in overcrowded hospital facilities, inadequate educational opportunities, a corrupt police force, bribery at all levels, inadequate social services, a broken down infrastructure, dissatisfied stakeholders, and disappointing custodians of public services.

In recent years, the Kenya government was criticized for its authoritarian political culture and corrupt political parties. Public officials were accused of systematically enriching themselves at the expense of the public. Law enforcement officials were accused of a degree of extortion that oppresses and exploits the poor. This laissez faire injustice can only stop with new leadership and national outrage.

- a) What is the policy of the newly elected government on ridding Kenya of this pattern of corruption? Are they serious?
- b) What can be done to support this goal?
- c) What can the Kenyan people expect in the future?
- d) What are the prospects of a successful transition in Kenya from the former to the current political elites?
- e) What can be done to transform Kenya's political culture to make corruption less prevalent? Is this a matter for law enforcement, or some other remedy?

6. ACCESS TO LAND TENURE, USE AND OWNERSHIP

In Kenya, there are three categories of land: Public land, private land and trust land. Public land is held in trust by the government as the custodian on behalf of the people.

Private land is owned by an individual or a group of individuals. The right to this type of land is certified by having a title deed. Trust land is held in trust by county councils on behalf of the community. Trust land mostly includes ancestral land and/or clan lands. This community land, entrusted to the local councils, belongs to all the people of the respective clans. Thus, trust land cannot be sub-divided, sold or given away by anyone, least of all the government. Nor can clan elders tamper with the land for whatever purposes. Yet, the successive past government officials, have continuously preyed upon trust lands, individualising and expropriating it.

The most rampant misuse of public land has been in the urban areas. Public land in the urban areas is often used for individual purposes and for promoting capital development. Because the government has the right to give away land to persons that it believes will put it to good use these lands, corruption has emerged in distributing public urban land. Instead of following the correct procedure, the former government used land as a reward for friends and political loyalty.

Slum and squatter settlements make up a large portion of the urban population. They generally suffer poor living conditions, lack of infrastructure, lack of basic social and sanitation facilities and are high crime insecurity zones. However, these unincorporated settlements play an important role by providing shelter for a significant portion of the labor force and as locations for many micro-enterprises.

Slum upgrading is essential to improving the living and social environment by facilitating secure land tenure and installation of basic urban infrastructure, services and housing at an affordable cost and with minimal displacement of the resident population. The objective of upgrading these informal settlements is to alleviate poverty, deliver better shelter and related facilities, creating more income generating activities. Provision of secure land tenure is an important political consideration when allocating land.

- a) What has been the social impact of the misappropriation of lands by political officials? How can this "land grabbing" corruption be stopped?
- b) Is land reform a serious priority for the new government? What are they doing to ameliorate this situation?
- c) Would land reform help resolve the problems associated with the growth of slums and squatter areas around Kenya's cities?
- d) Is there any possibility in Kenya that we will see conflict emerging from land tenure/use/access issues as have occurred in Zimbabwe?

7. THE PROBLEM WITH REFUGEES FROM REGIONAL CONFLICT

Kenya hosted approximately 245,000 refugees at the end of 2001, including an estimated 160,000 from Somalia, some 70,000 from Sudan, nearly 5,000 from Ethiopia, more than 5,000 from Uganda, and more than 3,000 from other countries. Internal violence uprooted some 6,000 Kenyans during 2001. An estimated 200,000 to 250,000 Kenyans were internally displaced at year's end. Approximately 30,000 new refugees and asylum seekers fled to Kenya during 2001, primarily from Somalia, Sudan, and Tanzania.

In the absence of a modern code of refugee law, the hundreds of thousands of refugees living in Kenya have no

legal status. Kenyan authorities required most refugees to live in three designated camps near the village of Dadaab in the country's remote east, and in three camps known as Kakuma in northwest Kenya. At the end of 2001, about 130,000 refugees lived in the Dadaab camps, and nearly 70,000 resided in the Kakuma camps. Tens of thousands of refugees continued to live without humanitarian assistance in urban areas, particularly in the capital, Nairobi. Domestic and sexual violence against females remained a chronic problem in and around the Dadaab and Kakuma camps where reported rapes increased during 2001. Government authorities asserted that more than 100,000 "illegal immigrants" lived in Kenya's main cities and towns.

- a) What is the social and cultural impact of the refugee population from conflict countries on Kenyan society? What can be done to improve the situation?
- b) Do these refugee populations represent a realistic or significant threat to national security or provide safe havens for terrorist and criminal organizations?
- c) What are the chances that these groups will return to their home countries in the foreseeable future? Or will they be a financial and social burden on Kenya indefinitely? Can these groups be integrated into Kenya society?
- d) What can the international community do to help? Is there a role for the United States here?