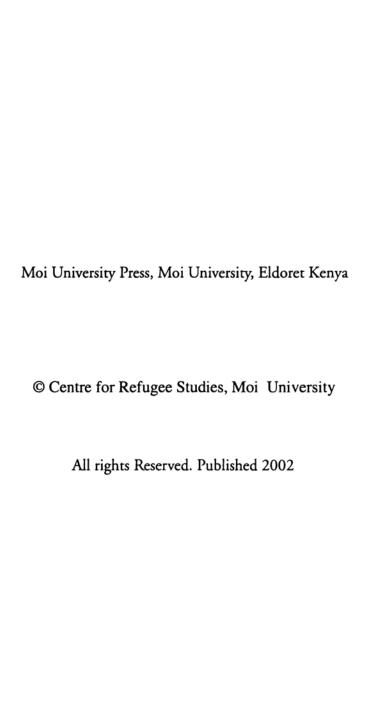# BLAMING THE ENVIRONMENT:
Ethnic Violence and the political Economy of Displacement in Kenya

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Moi University Press, Moi University, Eldoret Kenya

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Acknowledgement

ABSTRACT

Within the context of historical and political economy, this paper examines the link between environmental stress and the contemporary problems of ethnic violence and forced migrations, specifically internal displacement in Kenya. It examines the various theoretical linkages to political and ethnic persecution which cause displacement and environmental stress. Examining the historical antecedents of the phenomenon of displacement in Kenya, the paper argues that environmental stress per se cannot generate violence and displacement. Instead, over the years natural catastrophes and environmental degradation have created fertile grounds to justify violence. Internal displacement is essentially a creation of war, persecution, violence and human rights violations. The paper concludes that the healing process, beyond violence and displacement, must incorporate both the human-made causes of displacement and environmental problems.

INTRODUCTION

In 1991 'ethnic' violence broke out in Kenya, against a backdrop of the country's return to multi-party democracy and turbulent economic and environmental space. By 1997, nearly 2000 people had perished and almost 500,000 others displaced within Kenya. This paper examines the contemporary phenomena of internal displacement and ethnic violence. It situates the analysis within the raging debate on the role of environmental stress and forced migrations in the New World Order.

The number of people displaced within and outside the boundaries of their own country has increased alarmingly, contrary to popular expectations that the end of the Cold War would reduce violence and halt the tide of forced migrations. Out of the more than 20 million forcibly displaced people in Africa, an estimated 16 million are internally displaced persons. Major causes of displacement in Africa are given as war, including that arising earlier from the Cold War rivalry and South African destabilization in southern Africa, human rights violations, political, religious and ethnic persecution. Indeed, the preponderance of what is now popularly called 'informal repression' or state-sponsored violence to undermine or stall multi-party democracy in the post-Cold War era, has brought internal displacement to a fever pitch.

In the globally liberal orthodoxy, the massive influx of forced migrants is blamed on environmental stress, including drought, famine, degradation of land, water and forest resources. While refugee receiving countries, rich and

poor alike, resorted to the environmental argument to justify their hostility to asylum-seekers, neo–tyrannical regimes in Africa have often invoked it to conceal their involvement in what are essentially man-made calamities of ethnic violence and displacement. The internally displaced are victims of persecution, human rights violations, civil wars or generalized violence, and suffer as much, if not more than, conventional refugees. But unlike conventional refugees, internally displaced persons have not crossed an international border in search of protection. Although they are displaced from their homes and communities, they are still under the jurisdiction of their national government.

In theory, it is their national government which is responsible for their protection. The existing refugee conventions, therefore, do not apply to this category of forced migrants. Yet, most of the national governments are responsible for political repression and human rights violations which, in the first place, have generated the internally displaced. While there is a special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General on the internally displaced, the infrastructure for protecting the internally displaced is grossly inadequate. This paper examines the link between man-made calamities, including ethnic violence and human rights abuses, environmental stress and displacement. Within the theoretical framework of globalization and political economy, it attempts to debunk the on-going debate on forced migrations of extreme environmental determinism and establishes the true role of environment in displacement.

"INFORMAL REPRESSION" AND DISPLACEMENT

At the core of the historical and socio-economic phenomenon of globalization is the elevation of liberal democracy and human rights to the status of universal values. Accordingly, the spotlight of international and local human rights organisations has been focused on the performance of national governments . In response, neo-tyrannical regimes in Africa have resorted to informal or extra-legal methods of repressing and intimidating their opponents while at the same time avoiding international censure for gross human rights abuse. This has given rise to the phenomenon of "informal repression".

If the term is not familiar in the common political nomenclature, the phenomenon of "informal repression" is now only too evident across Africa. Governments have employed surrogate agents, including tribal or religious militia, secret service agents, or 'hit squads' to terrorize supporters of the opposition political parties, or government critics. The aim, as Article 19

aptly partly puts it, is "to perpetuate at the local level the restrictive structures of the one-party rule, while proclaiming their fidelity to democratic principles at the national level."

By so doing these governments have managed to predetermine the outcome of multiparty elections, by using violence to intimidate political rivals and to displace opposition supporters, and consequently to keep democracy in a "cold storage". Informal repression has gone hand in hand with the tactful exploitation of legitimate ethnic grievances arising from environmental degradation and ecological disasters like droughts.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL LINK

Since the 1980s environmental factors have been thrust to the center stage of migration issues, specifically forced migration. At the heart of the discourse is the view that environmental stress is a principal cause of forced migrations. In the words of one official source, "a great many population movements in the world are prompted by economic necessity. It is lack of future prospects, hopeless poverty, famine, and destruction of the environment that are the triggering mechanisms…" Zolberg et al (1989) have referred to: "the emerging realities of a continent …where man-made calamities interact with natural catastrophes." In the same vein, Kalumiya notes: "it is no coincidence that those parts of the continent that are most affected by soil erosion, drought and other environmental problems are also the main theatre of armed conflicts, recurrent famine and consequent refugee movements."

In the liberal orthodoxy, the blame for the escalation of asylum-seekers is laid on the door–steps of the post-colonial state. Its poor policies, over-population, economic mismanagement and even corruption are said to be responsible for the environmental woes which, in turn, have generated exoduses. This has also given rise to what Dowty (1987) describes as the "contemporary assault on the freedom of movement" in the 1990s. Richmond dubs it "global apartheid" where the 'White' North is closing its borders to the 'Coloured' South. In the process, political factors such as war, repression, and violation of the human rights, the real triggers of forced migrations, are downplayed.

Indeed, forced migrants from the south are cast as exceptional resource degraders. Thus the term 'environmental refugees' has come into vogue, and the notion of "Third World …refugees [who] are increasingly fleeing worn out lands for the industrialized countries of the North" popularized.

This has provided the lynch-pin for the prevailing backlash against forced migrants from the poor countries seeking asylum in the North. Gaim Kibreab, citing Widgren, perceptively observes:

> It has been argued by policy-makers in the North that people in Asia and African countries are fleeing their homes in large numbers not because of violation of their political and civil liberties but mainly because of poverty, inter–alia, caused by environmental degradation. Therefore, they see the North being invaded by millions of destitute people, fleeing their regions and abusing the asylum channel in search of opportunities for a 'full belly.'

Similarly, Third World governments are also closing their borders to asylum-seekers or throwing them out, citing their negative impact on the environment and on the fragile economies. As a result, there has occurred a global concentration of refugees in the poor countries, especially Africa with almost 85 percent of the world refugee population being in the South. Most importantly, the population of those displaced within their national borders has increased, thanks to informal repression by neo-tyrannical regimes and intensified ethnic violence. Again, these regimes are attributing the violence to land or border disputes, cattle rustling and other factors relating to environmental stress. The concepts of class and ethnicity are pivotal to the understanding of how environmental factors are exploited to trigger ethnic violence and the consequent displacement.

CLASS, ETHNICITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL STRESS

The analytic concepts of class and ethnicity are germane to the understanding of the political, economic and environmental conditions under which the internally displaced are generated. Since African class systems are in their formative stages, kinship and ethnic affinities are extremely significant in determining political dynamics and distribution of resources. The most significant class in African political arena, therefore, is the 'state class' or the governing class. He writes:

> [T]he state class is composed of the reigning political authorities, the central bureaucracy and its regional functionaries, the top echelons of the military and members of... the dominant political party.

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This class consists of a coalition of elites from one or several ethnic groups. Its power is based on its monopoly over the instruments of violence, including the police, the army, the secret services as well as intricate patron–client networks with the elite of other ethnic groups. Its control over state resources enables this elite to finance this clientelist system and to keep the society on an even keel.

Constructed within and across gender, class and religious identities, ethnicity largely thrives on the manipulation of tribal sensibilities by this patrimonial elite. Suffice it to say that it is not the primordial-based differences between ethnic groups which render ethnicity conflict–prone. Instead, it is the politicisation of ethnic differences under conditions of environmental stress, increasing competition over diminished resources and opportunities in the traditional and modern sectors, which has engendered violence and displacement. The governing class mobilizes ethnicity in order to conceal its material and political interests which are inter-fused with their monopoly over state power and resources. This is what Edmond Keller christens 'new ethnicity' in Africa.

The global upsurge of democracy and human rights and the emancipatory efforts by dominated groups to assert themselves in the political arena in the 1990s have greatly weakened the stranglehold of the governing class of the one-party vintage over the state. The escalation of ethnic violence in the 1990s is largely a response by the dominant elite to the democratic challenge. Violence has occurred in multi-ethnic regions, and has often thrived on exploiting genuine environmental and ecological problems.

HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS

Africa in general, and Kenya in particular, has a long history of forced migrations. The very peopling of the continent is often attributed to these migrations. However, little systematic work has been done on refugee movements in pre-colonial and colonial Africa. Most works concentrate on very recent times. Asylum-seekers of the pre-colonial vintage fled their homes for almost identical reasons as their modern successors. These included political repression, persecution, armed conflicts, civil strife and generalized violence. As Julius Nyerere aptly remarks:

> If one looks at what are called African tribal migrations over recent centuries, many of the movements would today be defined as 'refugee problems'. Minority groups, or dissident families were fleeing from dominant authorities and moved to what is now a different country. Very many African nations are made up of a lot of old waves of refugees.

Pre-colonial migrations fell under three categories: slave migrations, voluntary migrations of labourers, farmers, and traders and migrations of people displaced by warfare, natural disasters, famine or escaping from an outbreak of epidemics. These categories were, however, not hard-and-fast, but transient and interwoven. As Zeleza notes: "Slaves could escape and become refugees; migrant labourers could be enslaved, and refugees could become migrant labourers." The third category corresponds to our contemporary refugees.

The most common causes of refugee outflows included withdrawal to other territories or maroonage in inaccessible areas to escape from tyranny or enslavement. These migrations could either be temporary or permanent depending on the nature of the push factors and the degree of integration into the host community through acculturation and assimilation. Inter-marriages or adoption often resulted in refugee migrations becoming permanent.

The environmental stress and natural calamities such as drought, famine and diseases are often treated as the *deus* ex-*machina* for all cases of pre-colonial migrations. As Monsted and Walji rightly observe, "reasons for leaving an area and moving much further are usually related either to a severe drought or to overpopulation and overgrazing of an area." Civil wars, revolutions and incidence of generalized violence which resulted in forced migrations were almost singularly attributed to environmental factors.

There are two divergent views on the role of the environment during this period. On the one hand the pre-colonial era is seen as a golden age of harmonious relations between humans and natural environment. On the other, it is seen as a cesspool of ecological vagaries. Hence, the emphasis on the great stress and suffering, often culminating in famine, warfare, and migrations, caused by ecological calamities. However, all ecological problems, resulted in migrations. Africans developed a wide plethora of strategies of coping with environmental stress when it occurred, of preventing it from degenerating into chaos and destabilization, and of ensuring a quick healing process after the stress.

Ecological calamities, especially the deteriorating ecology of disease in the nineteenth century Africa, however, opened the flood-gates for the inflows of European and Asian immigrants. European immigrants in Kenya were able to alienate Africans and occupy their lands. This ignited the process of massive internal displacements of Africans in the name of 'victory' and 'emptiness' of the land, thanks to such epidemics as smallpox which had decimated and debilitated African populations in the nineteenth Century. Colonialism was ushered in as a veritable system of environmental degradation, this precipitated over half a century of racial dispute over land and other resources.

COLONIAL DISPLACEMENT

Brutal, oppressive and exploitative, colonialism was undoubtedly a veritable system that generated population movements. Migrations by Kenyan Africans under colonialism are often subsumed under the rubric of 'migrant labour'. The twentieth century opened with a massive inflow of European and Asians into Kenya. Over 20,000 Indians were forcibly brought to Kenya as labourers in the building of the Kenya/Uganda railway. Whether some of them stayed on after the completion of the railway is still a subject of great controversy among historians of colonial Kenya. Suffice it to state that from as early as 1840s, there existed a substantive diaspora of Indian settlers along the East Coast of Africa. The population of Asians in Eastern and Southern Africa was estimated at over 200,000 by the early twentieth century. Furthermore, out of 4.5 million European immigrants to sub–Saharan Africa, 1.3 million settled in East and Southern Africa, and a sizeable number of them in Kenya.

Three types of internal migrations by Kenyan Africans are discernible: voluntary movements of labourers, squatters and fortune-seekers; forced migrations of victims of land alienation and those who fled their homes to escape taxation, forced labour, harassment and violence by colonial officials. Scores of these, for similar reasons, crossed territorial boundaries and settled in Uganda and Tanzania.

Successive colonial administrations favoured and privileged European emigrants, over other races. They were perceived as the pivot of colonial economic development. This paved the way for gross violation of the human rights of other races, especially the Africans. A succession of draconian land regulations between 1899 and 1915 resulted in the alienation of massive tracts of arable lands belonging to the Africans in parts of Central and Rift Valley provinces and created whites–only 'White Highlands'. This was executed through brute force or dubious and highly disputed 'agreements' such as the

controversial Maasai Agreements of 1904 and 1911 which led to the take over of Maasai lands along the railway and their confinement to the drier parts of Laikipia. By 1930s the 'White Highlands' were fixed at 16,700 square miles, including 3,950 square miles of forest reserves.

By and large, most African native reserves were created as land deficit areas, sources of cheap coerced labour and damping grounds for excess and old labour that the weak settler capitalist sector could not absorb. Some of these reserves, especially in Central Kenya, were established in areas of marginal fertility and were subjected to incessant systemic impoverishment and degradation. Expropriation of land, the *Kipande* (pass) system, forced labour and draconian taxation were the foremost human rights abuses which, in turn, generated irresistible push factors for African migrations into settler farms.

By the early 1920s, more than half of the African population, or about 3.25 million, Kikuyu and Kavirondo were settled in reserves which totalled 8,856 square miles. Here, a combination of gross human rights violations by government agents and environmental stress, including over-population, over-cultivation, soil erosion, exhaustion, mining, declined land productivity and poverty, generated a whirlpool of social differentiation, conflict and insecurity. The capacity per acre in some of the worst hit reserves fell by no less than 50 per cent. As Berman aptly remarks, "the resulting insecurity and anxiety led to a rising level of conflict in the form of law suits, [which] turned family against family, brother against brother in an individual race for more acres of eroded soil". A new class of privileged Africans, often colonial agents, emerged in the reserves as the poor and the vanquished, also victims of colonial human rights excesses, moved to the settler capitalist sector. In 1945, Sir Philip Mitchell, Governor of Kenya, lamented that:

> The native reserves are just frankly going to the devil from neglect, and if the problem is not strongly tackled and at once, you will have a frightful problem of conflicting land interests in very few years, for what with 'white highland', native reserves and the rest, there is little flexibility in the position such as most countries give scope for coping with problems.

From the early 1900 thousands of the Kikuyu, Luo, Luhya and Kisii ethnic groups, who were predominantly agricultural, migrated to the White Highlands as squatter or sharecropper labour. The annual flow of 'migrant labourer' into the highlands stood at 15,000 per year in the 1920s. By the late

1940s, the Kikuyu alone stood at about 200,000. Some Nandi and Kipsigis, who were hitherto pastoral or semi-pastoral, also joined the ranks of the emerging African quasi-proletariat.

Competition over land between European settlers and squatter groups soon set the two on a collision course. The settlers blamed the Africans for the deteriorating environmental conditions in the highlands and began to systematically weaken the economic base of the Africans. Through their prodding, the colonial state imposed the infamous *kifagio* (sweeping or virtual elimination of African livestock) in 1929. And as Table I shows, environmental 'crimes' by Africans increased drastically in the 1930s. Bowles cogently argues that, the real environmental degraders were the settler farmers through their plantation agriculture, mono–cultural food production and inappropriate methods of ploughing. Furthermore, he argued that, the cash-crop economy that the settlers introduced engendered a production relation that undermined the environment by stating:

> First, aliens are even more likely than indigenous people to cause soil erosion through export crop production since the latter is their primary concern. Second, the alien owners demand labour, especially at times of peak agricultural activity, and reduce the ability of peasants thus recruited to carry out practised soil conservation measures on their own land. Third, the alienation of fertile land itself forces Africans into areas of marginal fertility where cultivation is more likely to cause erosion.

And the colonial state was keenly aware of this cruel fact, as numerous Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture overwhelmingly show.

Table I: Environmental Related Cases Against Africans in the Highlands (Selected Years 1935-1939)

Crime	Number of Cases			
	1935	1937	1938	1939
Illicit grazing	756	802	1035	1203
Theft of forest products	635	82	1101	970
Illicit honey hunting and careless use of firewood	94	255	338	233
Damage of trees	94	264	167	318
Others	74	-	120	108

Source: T. Kanogo, 1987:57

The crisis culminated in the Mau Mau war of liberation in the 1950s. Research by Tabitha Kanogo among others, reveals, the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru squatters were in the vanguard of the movement. There is no doubt that these groups had the longest encounter with colonialism and faced the full butt of its human rights abuses and environmental stress outlined above. The Mau Mau movement sought to expel European settlers from the White Highlands through violence and to open up the highland for African occupation. The government responded by declaring a State of Emergency in October 1952. About 100,000 Kikuyu squatters were sent back to the already overcrowded Kikuyu reserves in Central Province while about 60,000 were left behind for screening. At the height of the State of Emergency, an estimated 100,000 people were moved to different detention camps in the arid and semi-arid areas of Kenya.

Although the movement had been defeated by 1959, the British government gave in to Mau Mau's pressure for land reforms. And in 1961 the 'White Highlands' were opened up for all races. The British government created a pool of finances with funds from the World Bank and the Colonial Development Corporation to broker a peaceful transfer of land from European immigrants to the Africans under the policy of willing-buyer-willing seller.

While the interests of the British settlers were safeguarded by elaborate constitutional provisions on property rights, no effort was made to deal with the competing claims among Africans. The former pastoral and semi–pastoral groups, including the Kalenjin, Maasai and Turkana laid claim to the highlands on the basis of their 'historical rights' being the original inhabitants of the area. On the other hand, the former squatter groups, consisting of the Kikuyu, Luhya, Kisii, and the Luo hinged their claim on the 'sweat and blood' which helped to develop the White Highlands.

THE MAKING OF THE CLASH VICTIMS

The victims of ethnic clashes in the 1990s, specifically in the Rift Valley and Western Kenya, consisted of a mixed bag of forced migrants, voluntary economic migrants and fortune-seekers who moved to the highlands from as early as 1900. But a veritable wave of migrants occurred after independence. As Table 2 shows, the Rift Valley, Western and Coast provinces were destinations of hundreds of thousands of internal migrants escaping severe economic constraints, including poverty, landlessness, overpopulation and unemployment in other parts of the country. Consequently, the Rift Valley became the most populous province in Kenya with over 10 million people

and an annual population growth rate of 4.12 per cent, higher than the national average of 3.34 per cent by 1996.

From the 1960s these migrations were at the center of ethnic animosity and xenophobia, especially between the former squatter groups and the original inhabitants of the area, mostly the pastoral Kalenjin and Maasai. In the early 1960s, for instance, the Kalenjin and the Maasai formed vigilante groups to resist Kikuyu migrations and acquisition of land in the former 'White Highlands'.

Table 2: Inflows and Outflows of Population in Kenyan Provinces up to 1969 (rounded figures)

Province	Outflow	Inflow
Central	332,600	151,400
Coast	27,700	151,200
Eastern	161,900	33,500
North–Eastern	10,300	8,900
Nairobi	-	-
Nyanza	186,000	161,300
Rift Valley	88,000	428,400
Western	200,000	388,700

Source: P. Mbithi and C. Barnes: *Spontaneous Settlement in Kenya*. Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1975:82. NB: The large inflow of population into Western Kenya is as a result of the establishment of factories, especially sugar and paper based industries.

The Kikuyu forest residents in the Rift Valley were given notice to vacate the areas or expect a Kalenjin invasion. Again, a flare-up of ethnic animosity occurred when the Luhya declared Kitale town in Trans-Nzoia district their capital. The Sabaot, Pokot and Marakwet sub-groups of the Kalenjin interpreted this as a plot to disinherit them of their ancestral land, and threatened to take up arms. The Kikuyu and the Luhya communities have been the main targets of the clashes in the Rift valley and Western Kenya in the 1990s.

The integrationist regime of Jomo Kenyatta paved the way for major exoduses into the highlands from 1963. Kenyatta resisted pressure from militant Kikuyu groups, especially the ex–Mau Mau fighters who were organized around the Kenya Land and Freedom Army (KLFA), to give land to squatters in the former White Highlands freely. Instead, he played within the Bill of Rights, especially property rights, and encouraged the Kikuyu to buy land. Thus, the Kikuyu organised themselves into co-operative societies, limited companies and family and clan–based investment groups for the purposes of purchasing huge farms and sharing them out to members.

Laying the foundation of Kenya's pervasively patrimonial system which was characterized by political patronage and repression, Kenyatta brokered a Kikuyu–Kalenjin détente. In 1967 he appointed Daniel arap Moi, the foremost Kalenjin leader, to the seat of vice–president and his *de facto* successor. The latter denounced 'majimboism', distanced himself from anti-Kikuyuism and assisted many Kikuyu to buy land in the Rift Valley.

As xenophobia and ethnic animosity thawed, the government initiated the famous "million Acre Scheme" which settled over 35,000 landless families on some 1.2 million acres, mostly forest areas. In 1970, for instance, the government declared the Enoosupukia area of Narok a settlement land and demarcated it for the indigenous Dorobo and Maasai from Nairagie-Enkare area. Finding it unsuitable for pastoralism, these groups sold the land to cultivators, mainly the Kikuyu. Thousands of Kipsigis, a Kalenjin sub-group, also moved to Narok district and occupied tracts of land. These lands have been at the center of clashes since the 1990s.

The Government's land and environmental policies, however, accentuated ethnic conflict. In nomadic pastoral areas, the traditional system of communal land ownership was gradually replaced by individual freehold. Some Maasai elite exploited the policy loopholes in the land tenure and sold large tracts of communal grazing land to immigrants at exorbitant rates. This forced many pastoralists into becoming landless. Devoid of employable skills in the modern economy sector, this poor segment of the pastoral groups has been rendered destitute and exposed to ecological calamities such as droughts. They have often encroached upon areas reserved for wildlife such as Maasai Mara and the Maasai Amboseli Game Reserves which, in turn, has precipitated perennial conflict between them and the Wildlife Management Authority. Intra-Maasai clan feuds, which have often flared up into violence, have also increased. But it is the non-Maasai immigrants in Narok who have received the full impact of ethnic violence.

Moreover, segments of the Maasai and Kalenjin abandoned pastoralism and turned to full-scale agriculture. This heightened the demand and accentuated inter-ethnic competition for cultivable land between the former pastoral groups and immigrant groups. The problem was aggravated by rapid population growth among the former pastoral groups, thanks to food sufficiency as a result of their new engagement in agriculture and improved health care. The Maasai and the Kalenjin, for instance, experienced an annual population growth of 4.6 percent in the 1980s. Frequent droughts and famine in the late 1980s and early 1990s compounded the demographic dynamics in the Rift Valley.

As Table 3 reveals, most of the cases of land disputes recorded by 1997 were in the Rift Valley and Coast Provinces. In the 1990s these very spots of ethnic animosity have been the scene of the worst ethnic violence and displacement in Kenya's history.

Table 3: Ethnic Land Disputes in Kenya by 1997

Clash Zone	Province	Ethnic Groups Involved
Gucha/Kericho	Nyanza/Rift Valley	Kisii versus. Kalenjin
Gucha/TransMara	Nyanza/Rift Valley	Kisii vs. Nandi/Kakamega
Western/Rift Valley	Kalenjin	(Nandi) vs. Luhya (Tiriki)
Moi's Bridge	Rift Valley	Bukusu (Luhya) vs.Kalenjin
Narok	Rift Valley	Kikuyu vs. Maasai
Nakuru	Rift Valley	Kikuyu vs. Kalenjin
Uasin Gishu	Rift Valley	Kikuyu vs. Kalenjin
Rombo Area	Eastern/Rift Valley	Kamba vs. Maasai
Likoni/Kwale	Coast	Up-country Groups vs Miji Kenda
Migori/Gucha	Nyanza	Luo vs. Kisii
Migori/Kuria	Nyanza	Luo vs. Kuria
Mt. Elgon	Western	Sabaot (Kalenjin) vs. Bukusu (Luhya)
Trans Nzoia/Wests Pokot	Rift Valley	(Pokot) Kalenjin vs. Luo

Sources: Kituyi, 1991:9; *Weekly Review,* November 29, 1993: p.17; author's Compilation from various sources.

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THE DELUGE

As Kenya reverted to a multi-party system in 1991 KANU leaders declared that this would result in an outbreak of tribal violence. Furthermore, they invoked the 'Majimbo' policy "to safeguard the interests of smaller tribes and check the colonization and oppression by the majority (tribes)." The Majimbo policy is advocacy of a federal alternative to the unitary system and is meant to safeguard ethnic autarky and territorial hegemony. At its extreme, it evolved into an 'ideology' of ethnic cleansing, whose ultimate goal was to use violence to expel millions of non-Kalenjin from the Rift Valley.

Consequently in late 1991, violence targeted against non–Kalenjin erupted. Styled as 'informal violence', the so–called 'land clashes' relied on Kalenjin warriors who wielded traditional weapons such as bows, arrows, spears and machetes against the non–Kalenjin. They razed their houses, granaries and crops in the field, rustled livestock, raped, maimed and killed them with the object of unleashing enough pandemonium to get millions scurrying for safety. International human rights organizations indicted the government for instigating the violence. Wrote the Human Rights Watch:

> Recently, the government has relied on different tactics, such as extra–legal intimidation and violence, to silence and disempower critics. The change in tactics appears to be a deliberate move on the part of the government to avoid international censure. A growing culture of state–sponsored harassment and vigilante violence against opposition leaders and other critics is being encouraged and fostered by the government. The chilling aspect of the violence is that the government usually denies any knowledge of or responsibility to it, attributing it instead to unknown vigilantes.

The violence was viewed as a ploy by the KANU elite to alter the electoral demography and to pre–determine the out–come of the multi–party elections in the affected areas in favour of KANU and President Moi. The violence thrived on exploiting existing ethnic differences and stereotypes, economic and ecological problems to conceal state involvement.

The real figure of the displaced persons in Kenya as a result of the clashes is still a matter of conjecture. The National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCK), which sheltered thousands of displaced victims, estimated that within six months of the clashes, approximately 100,000 people had been

displaced by 1992. An official Kenyan Parliamentary Committee Report in September 1992, indicated that the clashes had resulted in 779 dead, 600 injured and 56,000 displaced. By mid 1993, a document by UNDP assessing the situation of the displaced in the Horn of Africa put the figure of the displaced persons at 223,700. A joint programme document on the violence by UNDP and the Kenya Government placed the figure at 255,426 by April 1993. In November 1993, a well-researched report by Human Rights Watch, African, estimated that the ethnic violence had left 1,500 dead and 300,000 displaced. Violence in the Rift Valley, Western and Nyanza provinces continued into 1995. In 1997, violence erupted at the Coast, killing 100 people and displacing over 100,000 others. It can be estimated that between 1991 and 1997, ethnic violence throughout the country left over 3000 people dead and over half a million others displaced.

THE ENOOSUPUKIA CASE

Enoosupukia in Narok district is an example of the area where environmental factors were explicitly invoked to justify ethnic violence. In October 1993, Maasai Morans attacked the settlers in the area, killing over 20 people and displacing more than 30,000 others. Charging that the Enoosupukia was a water–catchment area, Maasai leaders accused the predominantly Kikuyu settlers of "suppressing the Maasai, taking their land, and degrading their environment." The settlers, it was argued, had cleared forests, used the trees for charcoal burning, practised agricultural activities which degraded the environment and put the Maasai pastoralists living in the Suswa Plains at great ecological risks.

The clashes occurred against the backdrop of a debilitating drought in the 1993/94 period which decimated Maasai livestock and threatened their cattle economy thereby creating conflict between the pastoral and agricultural systems of production. Most of the Maasai pastoralists had moved from the plains to the Enoosupukia highland area in search of grazing fields and water. This land was owned by Kikuyu farmers on the basis of individual land tenure, making it impossible for the Maasai to freely graze their animals.

Against this background, KANU leaders declared the Enoosupukia area a trust land for the Narok County Council. This move was endorsed by the Minister of Environment and Natural Resources. The residents were given notice to vacate and were further told that the area would be gazetted soon as a protected area. Little alternative area of settlement was provided. The displaced believed that they were harassed and displaced because they did not

support KANU during the 1992 elections. The view that the Enoosupukia is a water catchment area was vehemently refuted.

About 10,000 displacees from Enoosupukia were sheltered at the Maela camp near Naivasha where they lived under squalid conditions. In December 1994, 200 of them were resettled at Moi Ndabi, a less productive and drier area than Enoosupukia. The rest were forcibly transported and damped at various spots in Central Province, regarded as the homeland of the Kikuyu. Twice displaced, these victims formed a new crop of Kenya's landless.

VIOLENCE AT THE COAST

On August 13, 1997 violence broke out at the usually serene Coast Province. Armed raiders, estimated at between 100 –500 attacked and razed Likoni police station to the ground, made away with about 50 guns and about 5000 rounds of live ammunition. The wave of violence rapidly spread to Ukunda, Msambweni and Matuga, in Kwale District. Sporadic attacks were also experienced in Kilifi District. By the time the violence subsided in November, 1997 over 100 people had been killed and more than 100,000 others displaced.

The clashes were attributed to grabbing of farm land and beach plots leading to the consequent massive displacement of the indigenous Mijikenda groups – the Kauma, Kambe, Chonyi, Rabai, Ribe, Giriama, Duruma, Jibana, and Digo. The violence targeted up–country people, mainly the Luhya, Luo, Kikuyu and Kamba. Having migrated to the Coast in search of land, employment and other economic opportunities, these groups posed competition to the Mijikenda in the labour market, social services and land acquisition. They were, thus, blamed for the latter's marginal status in the modern sector.

The growing incidence of land grabbing reflected the general malaise in the functioning of the state, particularly the crumbling political institutions. It was the well-placed politician, business and bureaucratic elite backed by state patronage rather than the poor up-country migrants who perpetrated the worst cases of land grabbing. There are many cases of massive displacement of the Mijikenda, especially the Digo through land grabbing. For example, a 21-acre land reserved for Jihadi mosque in Ukunda was grabbed and given to the Leisure Lodge. Again, over 340 Digo families from Chidze village between Ukunda and Diani were forcibly displaced and their land sold to investors. Four houses were burned when their Digo owners resisted eviction.

Like the Rift Valley clashes, violence at the coast revolved around traditional symbols and images, specifically the socio-environmental concept of the *Kaya*. Referring to the fortified traditional villages which were constructed in thickly forested areas for security reasons, Kayas were the training grounds for the raiders and also provided them with safe hiding places from which to launch their attacks. It is the political manipulation of such long–standing inter–ethnic disputes over land, which triggered the violence. Occurring against the background of the December 1997 General Elections, the coastal violence was widely viewed as a strategy by the governing elite to displace up-country vote and to pre-determine the outcome of the elections at the Coast.

VIOLENCE IN NYANZA AND TRANS MARA

A three-way ethnic violence flared up in Nyanza province and the neighbouring Trans Mara District in the Rift Valley province. The first zone of violence was the border between Gucha and Trans Mara Districts between the Kisii and the Maasai. The second scene was the Gucha/Migori border and pitted the Luo against the Kisii. Finally, violence occurred in the Migori/Kuria border and involved the Luo and the Kuria.

The violence at Gucha/Trans Mara border was widely associated with the traditional practice of cattle rustling between the Kisii and Maasai. But with Kenya's return to political pluralism, cattle rustling was interwoven with political differences between ethnic groups. Clashes in Nyanza centred around land disputes but also took the character of cattle rustling. So vicious did the clashes become that the government declared a security operation zone in Nyanza and Trans Mara in December 1997. This did not halt the clashes.

By the end of December, 1997 over 50 people had lost their lives and thousands displaced from their homes. Once again, the clashes escalated in the run-up to the December 1997 elections. They gave rise to the view that they were a plot by the governing class to manipulate ethnic differences and pre-determine the outcome of elections in their favour.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF DISPLACEMENT

The immediate impact of ethnic violence in Kenya was a full scale and wanton destruction of forest and other vegetation. This was because the clashes themselves were styled on widespread use of fire to burn houses, crops and vegetation. In March 1992, the Director of Forestry reported that 30,000

hectares of forest had been razed to the ground. Clash victims also set large tracks of forests on fire, particularly in Nakuru, when they suspected that 'warriors' were holed there.

More trees and bush–land were cleared to create room for camp sites. This was, however, limited by the fact that most victims took refuge in shopping centres and church compounds. But there was acute need for poles for the construction of shelters and wood–fuel. The amount of wood–fuel consumed in the displaced peoples' camps is difficult to ascertain, but it was certainly colossal. Rehabilitation programmes have focused on resettling the displaced on forest land rather than on their former lands. This has accentuated the rate of deforestation, particularly in Nakuru.

Extensive surveys have been carried out on the socio–environment of the internally displaced in western Kenya and the Rift Valley. Suffice it to say that the clash victims lived in congested rooms or compounds under squalid and unhygienic conditions. Over 500 people displaced from Elburgon and Kamwaura in Nakuru, for instance, lived in a one-room church hall and were served by six pit latrines and one water–tap which the church had installed outside. The story is the same in all displaced peoples' areas of shelter. As a result of crowded camp conditions, the victims, particularly children, contracted infectious diseases like tuberculosis and skin diseases such as scabies. In Maela camp, there was the problem of disposal of solid and human waste which, in turn, was drained into nearby rivers and water masses during the rainy season.

FOOD SECURITY

The clashed occurred in Kenya's breadbasket districts of Trans Nzoia, Nakuru and Uasin Gishu. This affected agricultural productivity and food security. That food was burned in granaries and in the field only compounded the looming agrarian and food crisis in the Rift Valley and western Kenya. Maize production for 1992 in the country was estimated at 2.34 million tons, a 6.1 per cent increase from the previous year, but still 390,000 tons below average. Wheat output fell from 195,000 tonnes in 1991 to 125,000 tons in 1992. In Molo, Nakuru, milk supply dropped from 75,000 litres a month to 29,000 during the same period. Kenya has since become a net food aid recipient.

The crisis was accentuated by the devastating drought that struck the country in the 1993/94 period and the massive influx of more than 420,000 refugees, approximately 1.6 percent of Kenya's population, from the war-torn

neighbouring countries. By mid 1993, the government announced that it needed food relief of approximately 176,000 tonnes in cereals and pulses, and US $31.6 million to transport the food to Northern Kenya and the Rift Valley province. The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) report indicated that the displaced persons needed 7,200 tonnes of cereals and 1,080 tonnes of pulses and other food items in emergency aid in 1993. In view of the Government's role in the ethnic clashes, its request for food aid from the international community appeared to have a hypocritical tinge. As one Church official lamented, "as food is being burned they [the Government] came back and asked the international community for the same."

Moreover, the Kenya Government did not put aside adequate resources to assist the internally displaced. In May 1992, the government announced in Parliament that it would provide food and other relief supplies valued at KShs.10 million (US $125,000) to the victims of the clashes. However, according to Human Rights researchers, only a tenth of this was actually distributed to the victims in Nandi, Bungoma, Trans Nzoia, Nakuru and Uasin Gishu districts. Nothing is known regarding what happened to the remaining nine million. The bulk of food and other relief supplies was provided by humanitarian and church organizations, including the Catholic Church, the NCCK and the Kenya Red Cross society. According to its Secretary General of NCCK, Reverend Samuel Kobia, the Council, for instance, was spending approximately KShs.16 million (US $200,000) on food each month to feed the displaced in ten districts. Perhaps more damning were the reports of Government attack and obstruction of operations by church relief workers.

CHANGING THE MAP OF LAND OWNERSHIP

The violence radically altered the existing pattern of land ownership and occupancy, especially in the Rift Valley. Because of fraudulent land transfers, illegal occupation, coerced land sales and exchanges as well as the collapse of the market value of land, some Kalenjin and Maasai acquired land formerly owned by other groups.

In Uasin Gishu District, for instance, the value of land declined by between 75 per cent and 80 per cent. The displaced were offered KShs.20,000 (or $ 250) instead of between KShs.80,000 and 100,000 ($1,000-1,200) per acre, the price before the clashes. As panic selling of land increased, one displaced man from Olenguruone, Nakuru district, is reported to have sold his six acres of land at KShs.70,000 (approximately $1,300) instead of the market price of KShs.600,000 (approximately $ 11,000).

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Some ethnic leaders encouraged their tribesmen to forcibly take-over and occupy land owned by the displaced persons. Area committees were even formed in Narok to oversee the take-over of such land. There are reports that title deeds belonging to the displaced were fraudulently transferred to Kalenjin and Maasai owners. The Government's complicity in these illegal land deals was borne out by the fact that the Commissioner of Lands, who gives consent to all land transfers, sanctioned these moves. As one lawyer in Nakuru remarked: "The government cannot claim that it is not aware of this because such a process cannot take place without the knowledge of the D.O. (District Officer) in the area."

Furthermore, the Government appeared reluctant to resettle the affected people back to their own lands. The government was even accused of frustrating efforts by the international community to fund the reintegration and resettlement of the clash victims to their former lands. In 1993, for instance, the UNDP embarked on a US $20 million Programme for Displaced Persons whose stated objective was "the reintegration of displaced population into local communities, prevention of renewed tensions and promotion of the process of reconciliation." The programme, which had already come under heavy criticism for not protecting the displaced and neglecting the human rights, and long-term needs of the displaced, came to an abrupt end in November 1995. This occurred almost eleven months after the Government violently dispersed and expelled about 10,000 displaced persons camped at Maela, near Naivasha, in December 1994. In the end, a class of landless families, a consequence of disinheritance and deprivation of property and gross violation of human rights by the violent clashes, has emerged in Kenya in the 1990s.

CONCLUSIONS

The foregoing discussion examined the links between environmental stress and the phenomenon of ethnic violence and internal displacement in Kenya. While the pre-colonial and colonial antecedents of the problem were examined, the main-stay of the analysis was the post-colonial period. It is demonstrated that environmental stress including competition for land, degradation of grazing and agricultural land, and marginalization of some groups generated ethnic tensions. But whether one is talking of a pre-colonial, colonial or modern society, social tension, relating to the environmental factors, has been accentuated by government policies which engender sustained discrimination, repression, human rights abuses and displacement.

The 'governing class' has tactfully exploited genuine grievances relating to environmental stress to justify violence against their ethnic rivals. Under colonialism, state land policies engendered degradation of land. This largely triggered the Mau Mau war and accentuated racial tensions and displacement. Post colonial land policies, including an inappropriate land tenure system, land grabbing and prospecting led to ethnic marginalization, tension and displacement. These tensions and grievances were exploited to foment the "land clashes" of the 1990s. Violence and displacements have, in turn, exacerbated environmental degradation, food insecurity and landlessness. Like their conventional refugee counterparts, the internally displaced have a profound impact on the environment particularly within and around the camps. The resettlement of the displaced and reconstruction of societies also entail environmental stress especially deforestation and over-use of wood fuel and poles for building houses.

Ethnic violence and internal displacement are, no doubt, foremost human rights problems. Over and above violating the victims' right to life, political and civil liberties, they have undermined the right to property through land alienation and wanton destruction of private property. This exposes a glaring lacuna in the prevailing regime for the protection of the populations displaced within their country's borders. Currently, the responsibility for the internally displaced lies with the government. This is so even though it is frequently their own government which is responsible for the human rights violations which caused the displacement in the first place. Hence, the need for a new system of protecting this category of forced migrants. This should take into account that governments are responsible for the repression, human rights abuses, including complicity in ethnic violence, which generates exoduses and internal displacement. Moreover, they continue to abuse the rights and freedoms of the displaced even in their camps of refuge, including beating them, putting obstacles to humanitarian groups which seek to highlight their plight and to administer to their needs, and forcibly expelling and dispersing the victims from the camps.

The environment, it was demonstrated, provides the long-term causes of forced migration and the context in which identities, including ethnicity, are manipulated by the political elite to trigger violence and displacement. A lasting solution to the problem, therefore, must necessarily incorporate the environmental component.

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