

‘POWER TO *UHURU*’: YOUTH IDENTITY AND GENERATIONAL POLITICS IN KENYA’S 2002 ELECTIONS

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ABSTRACT

Faced with the challenge of a new, multi-ethnic political coalition, President Daniel arap Moi shifted the axis of the 2002 electoral contest from ethnicity to the politics of generational conflict. The strategy backfired, ripping his party wide open and resulting in its humiliating defeat in the December 2002 general elections. Nevertheless, the discourse of a generational change of guard as a blueprint for a more accountable system of governance won the support of some youth movements like Mungiki. This article examines how the movement’s leadership exploited the generational discourse in an effort to capture power. Examining the manipulation of generational and ethnic identities in patrimonial politics, the article argues that the instrumentalization of ethnicity in African politics has its corollary in the concomitant instrumentalization of other identities — race, class, gender, clan, age and religion.

AS THE HISTORIC 27 DECEMBER 2002 ELECTIONS got under way, it became evident that Kenya was poised for ‘one of the most significant political changes since independence’.¹ The electoral victory of the ethnically based parties coalesced around the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) ended Daniel arap Moi’s 24-year patrimonial rule, which many Kenyans blamed for their economic miseries and for the erosion of accountability of state power and of respect for citizenship rights and the ideals of nationhood, reduced by corruption, greed and the cynical manipulation of ethnicity. NARC’s victory signified the triumph of ethnic pluralism and national rejuvenation. However, Kenya’s return to the multi-ethnic foundations of its nationhood in late 2002 occurred in the shadow of widening inter-generational discord and tension.²

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1. Anders Närma, ‘Elections in Kenya’, *Review of African Political Economy* 30, 96 (2003), pp. 343–50; see also Lionel Cliffe, ‘Kenya post-election prospects’, *Review of African Political Economy* 30, 96 (2003), pp. 341–3.

2. See ‘Children in the spotlight: a place in the African security debate’, editorial, *African Security Review* 11, 3 (2002), p. 1.

In fact, youth rebellion and violence, as I have argued elsewhere,³ became an indelible feature of the Huntingtonian ‘third wave’ of democracy that washed over Africa from the late 1980s. Indeed, the road to Kenya’s December 2002 elections was marked by widespread fear of the spectre of youth rebellion that had wreaked havoc in such African countries as Sierra Leone and Liberia.⁴

In the run-up to the December 2002 elections, President Moi capitulated to public pressure to step down and oversee a generational change of guard which would ensure transfer of power to a youthful leader. Moi unilaterally endorsed Uhuru Kenyatta,⁵ the son of his predecessor, Jomo Kenyatta, as his *de facto* successor as part of a grand scheme to perpetuate his patrimonial rule by proxy. ‘Project Uhuru’ was no more than a ‘buy one, get three’ gimmick aimed at packaging young Kenyatta with the *éminences grises* of the Kenya African National Union (KANU) — Nicholas Biwott, President Moi himself and his favourite son, Gideon. The strategy of instrumentalizing generational identity backfired, triggering a fierce intra-KANU conflict, defections and, eventually, the party’s electoral defeat, but it appealed to many followers of the youth group Mungiki.⁶ Criminal elements in Mungiki grasped the chance to deepen their patron-client relations with the KANU elite and, indeed, exploited the crisis of public security to entrench their interests in the informal sector and in Kenya’s burgeoning criminal underworld. But some followers saw in generational politics a genuine opportunity to capture state power by putting a youthful leader at the helm.

Mungiki’s plunge into Kenya’s electoral politics signified the upsurge of generational politics as an idiom of accountability of state power. In contemporary Africa, this is inextricably connected with what Paul Richards, in his study of the role of youth in the Sierra Leonean civil war, has described as ‘the crisis of [African] youth’.⁷ As the nineties decade

3. Peter Mwangi Kagwanja, ‘Warlord politics and the “Third Wave”: youth vigilantism and public security in multiparty Kenya’, paper presented at the conference on Political Economy of Kenya: Past and Present, St. Antony’s College, Oxford University, 27–28 May 2004.

4. As the 2002 elections drew nearer, the spectre of youth rebellion and violence loomed so large that donor funding, policy research priorities and advocacy by civil society organizations in Kenya shifted to questions of youth violence and security. The Nairobi office of the German Friedrich Ebert Stiftung organized youths to generate ‘a code of conduct for youths participating in politics’ [*Challenge of Leadership: A code of conduct for youths participating in politics* (Nairobi, 2000)]. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) redirected its funding to monitoring political violence and funded a new consortium of six national nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the Central Depository Unit, devoted to monitoring, documenting and publicizing issues of political violence.

5. *Uhuru* is a Kiswahili word for freedom or independence. It is also the name that Kenya’s first president, Jomo Kenyatta, gave to his son who was born on the eve of Kenya’s independence. The presidential candidacy of Uhuru Kenyatta signified, to many youths, the quest for a transfer of power to the younger (*Uhuru*) generation.

6. On Mungiki, see notes 12, 13 and 18.

7. Paul Richards, ‘Rebellion in Liberia and Sierra Leone: a crisis of youth?’, in O. W. Furley (ed.), *Conflict in Africa* (I.B. Tauris, London, 1995), pp. 134–70.

unfolded, Africa was awash with youth rebellions.⁸ Scholars went as far as suggesting that ‘the youth factor... may take over from ethnicity’ as the new axis about which African politics rotates.⁹ But, like ethnicity, generational identities have been manipulated and instrumentalized by Africa’s patrimonial elite. Africa’s young people, as Cruise O’Brien rightly observes, ‘are very poorly equipped to make their opposition effective: with their limited resources they are easily manipulated by their elders’.¹⁰ Mungiki’s is a tragic story of the powerlessness of Africa’s young people in the face of economic globalization, which has transformed them into pawns in the elite struggle for state power.

In the context of the discernible drift away from Western modernity towards the re-traditionalization of society which anthropologists and social analysts have identified in contemporary Africa, youths have adopted diverse aspects of traditional cultures including initiation rites and religious beliefs and practices as ideological foundations of their resistance.¹¹ In Kenya’s rural areas the Mungiki movement, which Grace Wamue unveiled as a paragon of the re-traditionalization of society, used traditional forms of mobilization and belief as instruments for restoring moral order and empowering the dispossessed.¹² But as David Anderson has cogently argued, when the movement stepped outside its rural base and ventured into the milieu of Kenya’s urban estates, shanties and slums, it absorbed some criminal elements and was transformed into a largely violent gang that was gradually co-opted by sections of the ruling elite to serve its patrimonial interests.¹³ Analyses of the Hutu *interahamwe* militias in the Rwandan genocide in 1994 revealed the double manipulation of generational and ethnic identities within the wider canvas of a re-traditionalization of the polity.¹⁴

Going beyond the manipulation of ethnicity by those in power, John Lonsdale has powerfully argued that it is possible to imagine ethnicity

8. See, for example, Kumi Naidoo, ‘The politics of youth resistance in the 1980s: the dilemmas of a differentiated Durban’, *Journal of Southern African Studies* 18, 1 (1992), pp. 143–65; Johannes Harnischfeger, ‘The Bakassi boys: fighting crime in Nigeria’, *Journal of Modern African Studies* 41, 1 (2003), pp. 23–49; Insa Nolte, ‘Identity and violence: the politics of youth in Ijebu-Remo, Nigeria’, *Journal of Modern African Studies* 42, 1 (2004), pp. 61–89.

9. Richards, ‘Rebellion in Liberia and Sierra Leone’.

10. Donal B. Cruise O’Brien, ‘A lost generation: youth identity and state decay in West Africa’, in Richard Werbner and Terence Ranger (eds), *Post-Colonial Identities in Africa* (Zed Books, London, 1996), p. 55.

11. Stephen Ellis, *The Mask of Anarchy: The destruction of Liberia and the religious dimension of an African civil war* (C. Hurst & Co., London, 1999); also his unpublished paper, ‘Young soldiers and the significance of initiation: some notes from Liberia’, presented at the African Studies Centre, Leiden, The Netherlands, April 2003.

12. Grace Nyatugah Wamue, ‘Revisiting our indigenous shrines through Mungiki’, *African Affairs* 100, 400 (2001), pp. 453–67.

13. David M. Anderson, ‘Vigilantes, violence and the politics of public order in Kenya’, *African Affairs* 101, 405 (2002), pp. 531–55.

14. Cf. Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, nativism, and the genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 2001). For a summary of the ‘invention debate’, see Patrick Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as political instrument* (James Currey, Oxford, 1999), pp. 49–62.

becoming the foundational myth of the modern nation-state in Africa and the corner-stone of more accountable systems of governance.¹⁵ Lonsdale draws a line between ‘political tribalism’ and ‘moral ethnicity’, identifying political tribalism as flowing ‘from high-political intrigue; it constitutes communities through external competition. In contrast, moral ethnicity creates communities from within through domestic controversy over civic virtue’. He concluded that moral ethnicity ‘is the only language of accountability that most Africans have; it is the most intimate critic of the state’s ideology of order’.¹⁶ Far from being a centrifugal force that tears society apart, ethnic identity in the context of moral ethnicity potentially forms the basis of a moral contract which could begin to force accountability on state power and, as Dickson Eyoh argues, to expand the space of civic citizenship and social justice.¹⁷ In an earlier article, I traced Mungiki’s emergence as a social movement that rose among youth in response to Moi’s kleptocracy.¹⁸ This article carries the study of Mungiki forward by studying how the movement’s leadership internalized and re-traditionalized the generational discourse as part of its effort to refashion and capture power, within the context of the deep patrimonial politics of the Moi succession in 2002. The article shows how Mungiki’s co-optation into a patron–client relation transformed it from a social movement into a criminal gang, leading to its fragmentation and eventual disintegration.

From fighting generation to lost generation

The idea of youth revolution is not new in Kenyan politics. Although youth rebellion was a feature of the Mau Mau war against British colonialism in the 1950s, with the disintegration of the multi-ethnic nationalist coalitions immediately after independence, youth identity, like ethnicity, was instrumentalized and transformed by patrimonial¹⁹ politics into a weapon in the hands of elders.²⁰ Prior to the elections that ushered Kenya to independence

15. John Lonsdale, ‘The moral economy of Mau Mau: wealth, poverty and civic virtue in Kikuyu political thought’, in John Lonsdale and Bruce Berman, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa. Book Two, Violence and Ethnicity* (James Currey, Oxford, 1992), pp. 315–468.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 466.

17. Dickson Eyoh, ‘Community, citizenship and the politics of post-colonial Africa’, in Ezekiel Kalipeni and Paul Zeleza (eds), *Sacred Spaces and Public Quarrels* (Africa World Press, Trenton, NJ, and Asmara, 1999), p. 273.

18. Peter Mwangi Kagwanja, ‘Facing Mount Kenya or facing Mecca? The *Mungiki*, ethnic violence and the politics of the Moi succession in Kenya, 1987–2002’, *African Affairs* 102, 406 (2003), pp. 25–49.

19. John Lonsdale, ‘Political accountability in African history’, in Patrick Chabal (ed.), *Political Domination in Africa: Reflections on the limits of power* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1986), p. 130.

20. Peter Anyang’ Nyong’o, ‘State and society in Kenya: the disintegration of the nationalist coalitions and the rise of presidential authoritarianism, 1963–78’, *African Affairs* 88, 351 (1989), pp. 229–51.

in 1963, the two main nationalist parties, KANU and the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU), both mobilized youths in the fierce struggle for state power. After independence, the government, at the behest of former Mau Mau veterans like Josiah Mwangi Kariuki of *Mau Mau Detainee* fame and General 'China' (Waruhiu Itote), created a National Youth Service to inculcate discipline and impart skills to demobilized KANU youths.²¹ Nevertheless, the manipulation of youth continued, especially during the 'Little Election'²² in 1966, when a revitalized KANU youth wing joined forces with the provincial administration to weaken its left-leaning rival party, the Kenya People's Union (KPU), led by former Vice-President Oginga Odinga.²³

At the height of the *Nyayo* era (1982–1990), President Daniel arap Moi revitalized the KANU youth wing as a powerful instrument for monitoring and punishing public dissent and asserting his authority. Terror and extortion were perpetrated by party youth on commuter buses, taxis and kiosk businesses abetted by a patron–client relation in a classic demonstration of the criminalization of the state,²⁴ eliciting counter-violence by touts, shoeshine and parking boys, vendors and hawkers. Founded in 1987 by youths, Mungiki is a true child of the age of resistance to Moi's patrimonial rule and a sign of the increasing use of generational politics as an idiom for the accountability of state power.²⁵

The Huntingtonian 'third wave' of democracy in the 1990s brought the instrumental use of generational identities to frightful levels.²⁶ The pro-democracy movement, earlier spearheaded by mainstream churches and reformist lawyers,²⁷ was boosted when two former cabinet ministers, Kenneth Matiba and Charles Rubia, publicly called on Moi to repeal section 2A of the 1982 Act that made Kenya a *de jure* one-party state, to dissolve parliament and hold a public referendum to chart the country's

21. In the post-Moi era, the NARC government has revitalized the National Youth Service (NYS) as part of its response to youth delinquency and vigilantism.

22. Cherry Gertzel, *The Politics of Independent Kenya, 1963–1968* (East African Publishing House, Nairobi, Kenya, 1970), pp. 73–124.

23. KPU was banned by a presidential fiat in 1969, and its leaders detained; see David Throup and Charles Hornsby, *Multi-Party Politics in Kenya: The Kenyatta and the Moi states and the triumph of the system* (James Currey, Oxford, 1998).

24. Jean-François Bayart, Stephen Ellis and Béatrice Hibou, *The Criminalization of the State in Africa* (James Currey, Oxford, 1999).

25. Kagwanja, 'Facing Mount Kenya'.

26. Crawford Young, 'The Third wave of democratization in Africa: ambiguities and contradiction', in Richard Joseph (ed.), *State, Conflict and Democracy in Africa* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, CO, 1999), pp. 15–38.

27. David Throup '“Render unto Caesar things that are Caesar's”': Church-state conflict in Kenya, 1978–90', in Holger Bernt Hansen and Michael Twaddle (eds), *Religion and Politics in East Africa* (James Currey, London, 1995), pp. 143–76; Jennifer Widner, *The Rise of a Party State in Kenya* (University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, 1992); Joel Barkan, 'Kenya: lessons from a flawed election', *Journal of Democracy* 4, 3 (1993), pp. 85–99.

future. The boldness of the two, including their application for a permit to address a public rally in Nairobi's Kamukunji Grounds on 7 July 1990, struck a chord with Kenya's urban crowd and rural poor. The denial of permission to the two to hold the rally, leading to their arrest and detention on 4 July 1990 under the Preservation of Public Security Act, hardened youth politics, especially in Kenya's urban areas.²⁸

On 7 July 1990, which came to be called *Saba Saba*, the ruling elite mobilized KANU youth wingers to reinforce riot police in dispersing a defiant crowd that attempted to gather at Kamukunji Grounds. More than 20 people were killed, 1,000 arrested and between a few dozens and several hundreds injured in riots that rocked Nairobi and spread to the Kikuyu-inhabited towns of Nakuru, Naivasha, Nyeri, Murang'a and Thika, where the arrest and detention of Matiba and Rubia deepened hostility to Moi's regime.

Simultaneous with Kenya's return to multi-party democracy in December 1991, KANU instituted a reign of state-sponsored vigilante terror in urban areas using militias called *majeshi ya wazee* ('armies of the elders'), with the aim of derailing democracy.²⁹ In a classic form of re-traditionalization, the KANU elite also embarked on 'playing the communal card'³⁰ by underwriting 'tribal militias' to wreak havoc on rival ethnic groups. The 're-traditionalization' of youth violence was an element in a dirty war on citizens suspected of supporting the opposition, part of a strategy to keep democracy in cold storage.³¹ Through the sponsorship of 'tribal militias', naked and painted with red ochre or clad in traditional *shukas* (cotton sheets), which assaulted their victims with spears, arrows or swords, the Moi government succeeded in hiding behind images of the 'communal' and the 'primordial' attached to 'tribal warriors' to conceal its role in grossly violating the human rights of its citizens. Between 1991 and 1998, violence linked to 'tribal militias', such as the Maasai Morans, Kalenjin Warrits, Chinkororo (Kisii), Sungu Sungu (Kuria) and Kaya Mbombo (Digo of the Kenya coast), claimed an estimated 3,000 lives and displaced nearly half a million Kenyans.³²

Grace Wamue³³ and David Anderson³⁴ have traced Mungiki's progress from this state-sponsored cataclysm. Emerging during the high noon of

28. Throup and Hornsby, *Multi-Party Politics*, pp. 14–16.

29. Makumi Mwagiru, Olang Sana and Keneth P. Njau, *Facts About Majeshi Ya Wazee* (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation and Centre for Conflict Research, Nairobi, Kenya, 2002).

30. Human Rights Watch, *Playing the Communal Card: Communal violence and human rights* (Human Rights Watch, New York, NY, 1995).

31. Human Rights Watch, *Divide and Rule: State-sponsored violence in Kenya* (Human Rights Watch, New York, NY, November 1993).

32. See Peter Kagwanja, *The Right to Return: The internally displaced persons and the culture of impunity in Kenya* (Kenya Human Rights Commission, Nairobi, Kenya, 2001).

33. Wamue, 'Indigenous shrines'.

34. Anderson, 'Vigilantes, violence'.

Moi's repressive patrimonial system as an expression of youth resistance and a voice of moral ethnicity, Mungiki was co-opted and transformed into a deadly instrument of political tribalism and terror.

'Project Uhuru': nation, tribe and generation politics

Ahead of the December 2002 national elections, President Daniel arap Moi, who had for long thrived on the politics of ethnic manipulation, launched what came to be known disparagingly as 'Project Uhuru'. In its widest sense, Project Uhuru denoted President Moi's strategy of whipping up generational sentiments and giving a new youthful shade to Kenya's body politic by elevating the 'uhuru generation' to the higher echelons of his party and government to upstage challengers both within his party and among the opposition. In its narrowest meaning, it referred to his obdurate support of Uhuru Kenyatta as his anointed successor and KANU's standard-bearer in the 2002 presidential contest.

Moi, the self-proclaimed 'professor of politics', aroused generational sensibilities partly to exorcise the ghost of his flawed mandate in the 1992 and 1997 elections,³⁵ but more importantly, to deal with an emerging trans-ethnic opposition alliance. In early 2002, three opposition leaders — Mwai Kibaki, Wamalwa Kijana and Charity Ngilu — took to heart the hard lesson of the 1992 and 1997 elections that fragmentation along ethnic lines was the main reason for their failure to dislodge KANU from power. They forged an inter-ethnic political alliance, the National Alliance for Change (NAC), later renamed and registered as the National Alliance Party of Kenya (NAK). As an alliance of three largely ethnic-based parties — Kibaki's Democratic Party (DPK), Wamalwa's Forum for the Restoration of Democracy-Kenya (FORD-Kenya) and Ngilu's National Party of Kenya (NPK) — NAK brought together Kenya's largest ethnic group, the Kikuyu (and their Embu and Meru cousins), the Kamba and the Luhya, which, together, represent more than half of Kenya's 31 million people.³⁶ Further, NAK was engaged in intense negotiations with the largely Kisii-based FORD-people led by Moi's nemesis, Simeon Nyachae.

From early 2002 Moi embarked on playing the generational card to outmanoeuvre veteran politicians like Kibaki and Nyachae. He struck a familiar nationalist chord by appointing to his cabinet Uhuru Kenyatta and Raila Amolo Odinga, sons of Kenya's foremost nationalist heroes, Jomo Kenyatta and Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, respectively, together with a

35. Roger Southall, 'Moi's flawed mandate: the crisis continues in Kenya', *Review of African Political Economy* 25, 75 (1998), pp. 101–11; Throup and Hornsby, *Multi-Party Politics*.

36. The three leaders vied for the presidential elections in December 1997 where Kibaki came second to Moi with 31% while Wamalwa and Ngilu garnered 8.3% and 7.7%, respectively, which, combined, outstripped Moi's 40.1%.

popular young Nandi parliamentarian, Kipruto Kirwa.³⁷ For balance, Moi also appointed to the cabinet Cyrus Jirongo, Julius Sunkuli and William Ruto, former leaders of Youth for KANU-1992 (YK 92) which had gathered money, bought votes and intimidated voters and candidates, thus partly ensuring KANU's victory in that year.³⁸ KANU's constitution was revised prior to the party's delegates' conference, allowing Moi to have four deputies and enhancing his powers as party chairman. During the delegates' conference on 18 March 2002, Moi raised generational sentiments to a high pitch by parading KANU's Young Turks like Uhuru Kenyatta, Musalia Mudavadi, Kalonzo Musyoka and Raila Odinga, promising that he would pass on power to the *uhuru* generation. The delegates elected Uhuru, Mudavadi, Katana and Kalonzo as party vice-chairmen and Raila as secretary-general, but retained Moi as chairman in a move widely viewed as a ploy of extending his patrimony beyond his presidency.³⁹

The conference also saw the merger of KANU and the Luo-based National Development Party of Raila Amolo Odinga, a youthful politician who scored 10.9% in the 1997 presidential election. Although the KANU-NDP merger delivered 20 parliamentary seats from Luo-Nyanza to the ruling party and infused young blood into the 'new KANU', it also introduced divisions within the party. Four factions have been identified: 'the old-guards led by then Vice-President George Saitoti and Ministers William Ntimama and Joseph Kamotho; reformist new-guard parliamentarians, mostly elected in 1992 and 1997 . . . ; a soft middle ground of KANU moderates, including one-time presidential fore-runner, Musalia Mudavadi; and Raila Odinga's former NDP cohort'.⁴⁰

Things began falling apart on 30 July 2002, when Moi unilaterally endorsed Uhuru Kenyatta as his successor and KANU's standard bearer in the presidential race.⁴¹ Moi's unilateral endorsement of young Kenyatta split KANU wide open. A revolt led by Vice-President George Saitoti, Moi's long-standing Maasai ally, William Ntimama, staunch Kikuyu ally Kamotho, and ambitious Young Turks like Kalonzo and Raila led to the

37. See Peter Mwangi Kagwanja, 'The clash of generations? Youth identity, ethnic violence and the politics of Moi succession, 1991-2002', in Jon Abbink and Ineke van Kessel (eds), *Vanguards or Vandals? Youth, politics and conflict in Africa* (Brill, Leiden, , The Netherlands, 2004), pp. 81-109.

38. *Daily Nation*, 21 and 26 November 1992.

39. Center for Strategic and International Studies, 'Preview of Kenya's December 27 national elections', *CSIS Africa Notes* 12 (2002); Catherine Bond, 'Kenya's Moi Faces Party Rebellion' <<http://archives.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/africa/10/11/kenya.moi.alliance>> Accessed on 11 October 2002.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 1.

41. In retrospect, Moi seems to have identified Uhuru Kenyatta as his anointed successor much earlier. In 1996, Moi created a new Thika district with Uhuru as KANU chairman, in spite of fierce resistance by KANU old timers like Joseph Kamotho. Although Uhuru failed to win the Gatundu parliamentary seat on a KANU ticket in 1997, he was appointment chairman of the Kenya Tourist Board, quickly followed in October 2001 by a double appointment as a nominated Member of Parliament and Minister for Local Government.

formation of the Rainbow Alliance, a caucus within 'new KANU' implacably opposed to 'Project Uhuru'. Finally, in October, the Rainbow Alliance group abandoned the KANU ship and joined a little-known opposition party, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), accusing Moi of insisting on the queue-voting system rather than allowing secret ballot elections of party delegates at branch levels and of packing the party conference with pro-Uhuru delegates to ensure his victory during the second KANU delegates' conference in mid-October 2002.

On 14 October, when KANU officially declared Uhuru as its presidential candidate, LDP embarked on negotiations with NAK, which had already nominated Kibaki as its presidential candidate, to form a 'super-alliance' against KANU. This led to the formation of the NARC on 21 October, an eclectic assemblage of the main opposition parties, except Nyachae's FORD-people. NARC endorsed the 70-year-old Kibaki as the coalition's presidential candidate. Raila became the icon of the 'youth rebellion' as the tactician behind the revolt against Moi and KANU.⁴²

Analysts of the 2002 political environment discerned a non-ethnic situation where 'Kenya's tradition of political competition along ethnic lines is being replaced by a more complex political dynamic in which KANU and NARC, each an increasingly broad-based, ethnically heterogeneous coalition, now compete fiercely for support across a broad range of constituencies'.⁴³ The formation of NARC eclipsed the ethnic base of Kenya's electoral politics, depriving Moi of another opportunity to position 'the Luo against the Kikuyu in his perennial moves for survival'.⁴⁴ The fact that the two main presidential contenders, Kibaki and Uhuru, were from one ethnic group — Kikuyu — contributed to the elimination of ethnic sensibilities and tensions from the presidential contest and linked it to the more pertinent issues of experience, suitability and development.

Unable to play the ethnic card, KANU turned to generational politics, positioning young Uhuru against elderly Kibaki and tightening its patron-client relations with the predominantly Kikuyu Mungiki movement. The NARC's Young Turks retorted by the clarion call *Kibaki tosha* ('Kibaki is enough for Kenya'). Mungiki plunged into the electoral fray, throwing its support behind Moi's 'Project Uhuru'. Like the urban youth gangs and vigilantes in Nigeria which draw on pre-colonial idioms of organization based on hierarchical age systems,⁴⁵ Mungiki leaders re-traditionalized the

42. CSIS, 'Preview', p. 2.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

44. E.S. Atieno Odhiambo, 'Hegemonic enterprises and instrumentalities of survival: ethnicity and democracy in Kenya', *African Studies* 61 (2003), p. 37. A Kikuyu-Luo political détente evokes memories of the KANU victory over KADU in the 1963 elections. While keeping the Luo at bay was the challenge that confronted the Kenyatta state, guarding against a Kikuyu-Luo political alliance was the preoccupation of the Moi state.

45. Charles Gore and David Pratten, 'The politics of plunder: the rhetorics of order and disorder in southern Nigeria', *African Affairs* 102, 407 (2003), pp. 211–40.

demand for a generational transfer of power by reinventing the Kikuyu idea of *ituika* as an idiom for mobilizing its rank and file in support of the Uhuru candidacy. But to the movement's leadership and to urban-based criminal elements, the generational change of guard was an idiom for reinforcing clientelist relations with the KANU elite to ensure continued power and control over Kenya's criminal underworld.

Project Uhuru and the re-traditionalization of society

Deborah Durham⁴⁶ has suggested that analyses of youth must elucidate local understandings and determine in what kind of political space young people participate; it is also critical to probe what kind of ideology drives their politics. This sheds light on the kind of politics that shaped Mungiki's response to Moi's Project Uhuru. In an earlier article, I traced the ideological and political legacy of the Mau Mau on the Mungiki movement.⁴⁷ In this article, this legacy is examined in the context of generational politics and Mungiki's effort to re-traditionalize the discourse surrounding a generational transfer of power in 2002. During the electioneering period, Mungiki's ideological trajectory drew heavily from debates on *ituika* in the 1940s and 1950s.⁴⁸

Mungiki's view of the traditional transfer of power was based on a close reading of writers on Kikuyu social history and of fiction, such as Jomo Kenyatta⁴⁹ and Ngugi wa Thiongo,⁵⁰ and on oral histories of the Mau Mau, all of which reinforced the idea of youth revolution. The myth of *ituika*, itself an ideology of generational transfer of power, had exercised an immense influence on the Mau Mau fighters.⁵¹ The generation that spearheaded the revolt against tyranny was given the name *Mwangi* ('one who captures, conquers, triumphs or gathers together'). The next generation which had the task of consolidating a democratic tradition came to be called *Irungu* (taken from the verb *runga* which means 'to put straight'). The *ituika* system, therefore, produced a political dispensation in which the whole Kikuyu nation was divided into two generations, the older one in

46. Deborah Durham, 'Youth and the social imagination in Africa', *Anthropological Quarterly* 73, 3 (2000), pp. 113–20; see also her 'Just playing: choirs, bureaucracy, and the work of youth in Botswana', in F. De Boeck and A. Honwana (eds), *Children and Youth as Emerging Categories in Postcolonial Africa* (James Currey, Oxford, 2005), pp. 150–71.

47. Kagwanja, 'Facing Mount Kenya'.

48. This part is largely based on interviews with scores of Mungiki members between November 2001 and August, 2002 under the aegis of the Kenya Human Rights Commission's USAID-funded project on 'Monitoring Election Violence in Kenya', which I designed and implemented.

49. Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya* (Secker and Warburg, London, 1938).

50. Ngugi wa Thiongo, *The River Between* (Heinemann Educational Books, Oxford, 1965).

51. For an incisive analysis of the generational aspects of the Mau Mau, see Lonsdale, 'Moral economy'.

power and the younger one waiting in the wings. It also formalized the alternating succession of ritual authority between the two generations.

It was, however, the trope of resistance and revolutionary change in Kikuyu political thought that is the most enduring legacy to Mungiki politics. At the core of Kikuyu thought on youth rebellion was the myth of the *iregi* ('resisters' or 'refusers'), a revolutionary generation that rebelled against and overthrew tyranny and restored the right of citizenship and civic virtues in the mythical Kikuyu society. The *iregi* revolutionary heroes became iconic of the Kikuyu past, driven by a collective search for a new moral order, equity and justice.

In the 1930s and 1940s, the role of *iregi* in the *ituika* was concretized by the speeches and writings of nationalists like Jomo Kenyatta, who redirected it to the moral dictates of ethnic nationalism. Critics saw the Mau Mau as a re-enactment of the *ituika*, which Jomo Kenyatta had projected as revolution in his book *Facing Mount Kenya*. Indeed, Mau Mau's fighting oath, *batuni*, was sprinkled with *ituika* symbols.

Thus, the idea of *iregi* became associated with the trope of youth rebellion that dominated the notion of *ituika*. Members of the Forty (age) Group (*riika ria fourty*) that formed the bulk of the Mau Mau fighting force imagined themselves as the heroic *iregi* revolutionaries. In his autobiography, General Waruhiu Itote, who in August 1952 became one of the first youths to enter the forest to prepare for war, described his forest base as *thingira wa iregi*, 'the hut of revolution'.⁵² However, what loomed large in Kenyatta's idea of the re-enactment of *ituika* was not inter-generational discord, but the harmony between youth and elders that underpinned the Mau Mau movement. While a few Mau Mau warriors may have 'expected to lead "the night of the long knives," and take over from their elders, the vast majority saw themselves as *itungati* (rearguard or servants). Experienced *itungati* [rearguards] were to all intents and purposes the "strong fortress" that civil leaders needed behind them',⁵³ and the backbone of the Mau Mau.

Both the Mau Mau and the *ituiki* narrative provided the political text for Mungiki youths in their interpretation of politics in multi-party Kenya. Mungiki began to imagine Kenya as a country immersed in a generational struggle between elders and youths. They accused the generation of elders of overstaying in power, repressing the youth and looting the Kenyan nation. Mungiki cited rampant corruption and land grabbing that had reached mega-proportions in multi-party Kenya to support the claim that the '*Mwangi* and *Irungu* generations have betrayed the country and,

52. Waruhiu Itote, *Mau Mau General* (East African Publishing House, Nairobi, Kenya, 1967), p. 55. The Kikuyu word *thingira* is the elder's hut, but the author translates it as 'the cottage of our ancestors', a conscious effort to invoke the spirit of the *iregi* ancestors.

53. Lonsdale, 'Moral economy', p. 450.

therefore, must get out of power'.⁵⁴ They argued that the *Mwangi* and *Irungu* generations had failed to ensure a smooth transfer of power at the due moment in 1932 and thus disrupted the traditional generational order of things. After the nomination of Uhuru Kenyatta in August 2002, Mungiki invoked the trope of youth rebellion signified by the *iregi* generation in preparing its followers for a takeover of power in case the elders should refuse to vacate.⁵⁵

Mungiki ideologues came to believe that youth has a duty to restore the generational system. The process begins with the youth (Mungiki) assuming the role of the *iregi* generation and initiating the revolution that will usher the *Mwangi* generation to power. 'We are neither *Mwangi* nor *Irungu*', declared one youth informant, 'we are *iregi*'. The concept of *iregi* is extended not only to the generational politics of power in the national space but also to the international realm to designate resistance to the Christian church and the exploitative forces of globalization and westernization. The *iregi* ideology of resistance pervaded every aspect of Mungiki's social and political thought and cultural practices. Mungiki youths assumed the name *njama* (singular *munjama*) which can be translated as 'warrior class' and 'warrior', respectively. Their conversations and ceremonies are punctuated by a language of combat. The self-introduction or the contribution of a *munjama* during a public gathering of Mungiki members is referred to as *guikia itimu* ('throwing a spear'). The diet of choice for the *njama* is meat and milk, the preferred food of Kikuyu warriors especially when preparing for war.

David Anderson has shown how Mungiki's vision was based on the prophecy of the Kikuyu seer Mugo wa Kibiru.⁵⁶ Its vision of youth leadership carried a strong element of Mugo's message of a redemptive youth, a messiah, which is captured by the Kenyan novelist, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, as follows:

[S]alvation shall come from the hills. 'A [young] man [shall] rise and save the people in their hour of need. He shall show them the way; he will lead them . . .'⁵⁷

Inspired by Mugo's message of a redemptive youthful leader, many Mungiki adherents found in Uhuru Kenyatta this 'liberatory' young man 'from the hills',⁵⁸ whom they adoringly referred to as *kamwana* ('the youth') — curiously, in view of his evident association with the Moi patrimony.

54. Interview, Gacheke Gachihi, August, 2002.

55. Edmondo Cavicchi, *Problems of Change in Kikuyu Tribal Society* (Kegan Paul, London, 1977), see 'Appendix I: The handing over of ruling powers by the *Mwangi* generation to the *Irungu* (Maina Kanyi) generation in 1932', pp. 207–8.

56. Anderson, 'Vigilantes, violence'.

57. Ngugi, *The River Between*, p. 21.

58. The concept of the hills is central to Kikuyu thought concerning their ancestral homeland of Kenya's Central Province. Uhuru hailed from 'the hills' as opposed to the Kikuyu main diaspora in the Rift Valley.

'We, the uhuru generation': Mungiki and the Uhuru project

Mungiki's leaders claimed that their endorsement of Uhuru's presidential bid was based on generational interests rather than ethnic affiliations. 'Mungiki's political agenda', said the movement's chairman and spiritual leader, John Njenga Maina, 'is to campaign for youthful leaders and phase out the older generation. That is why we are supporting Uhuru since he is young'.⁵⁹ On nomination day, writes one commentator, hundreds of thousands of Mungiki youths 'came in buses and mini-buses, donkey-carts and on foot, descending on Nairobi streets from all directions' in a procession that caught many Nairobi residents by surprise.⁶⁰ Imagining themselves as the *iregi* revolutionaries of Kikuyu mythology, these Mungiki youths wielded machetes, clubs or sticks, in a dramatic parade that resembled the *interahamwe* in the 1994 Rwanda genocide.

The Kenyan press accused the law enforcement agencies of duplicity for tolerating what it had called 'anarchic' youths. 'The police', it was said, 'looked like they were actually guiding demonstrators carrying placards and snuff boxes to the venue, where speeches denouncing the Local Government minister's [Uhuru Kenyatta's] political enemies were made'.⁶¹ The attorney general, Amos Wako, also censured police behaviour as a 'serious dereliction of duty'.⁶² A few days later, supporters of NARC were violently dispersed from Uhuru Park by riot police. Opposition leaders accused the government of double standards in dealing with all parties to the elections.

Uhuru Kenyatta himself swung between publicly distancing his campaign from Mungiki's acts of terror and covertly soliciting Mungiki's support, arguing that 'anybody had the freedom to support whoever he wanted'.⁶³ He represented Mungiki youth as victims of Kenya's economic meltdown, arguing that 'Majority joined the sect because they were idle but they are still our brothers and sisters who should not be hated or secluded from the society but encouraged to reform'.⁶⁴ However, Uhuru's staunch Kikuyu supporters like the Nairobi mayor, Dick Waweru, and Juja MP, Stephen Ndicho, had no qualms about openly supporting the sect on the grounds that 'despite their militancy on some contentious issues,

59. 'Mungiki sect to support KANU, Saitoti and Uhuru in poll', *The East African Standard*, 4 March 2002.

60. Njuguna Waweru and Philip Mwakio, 'Uhuru now defends Mungiki adherents', *The East African Standard*, 26 August 2002.

61. 'Is Mungiki now legitimate?', *Daily Nation*, 21 August 2002.

62. Nancy Khisa, 'A-G orders arrest of Mungiki followers', *East African Standard*, 22 August 2002.

63. 'Uhuru denounces Mungiki, denies links with sect's members', *Daily Nation*, 23 August 2002; 'Uhuru shies away from hostile crowds as Mungiki refuses to be disowned', *Daily Nation*, 14 October 2002.

64. Waweru and Mwakio, 'Uhuru now defends Mungiki adherents'.

Mungiki followers were Kenyans and should be accommodated as they also had a role to play in nation-building'.⁶⁵

But perhaps Mungiki's spokesman, Ndura Waruinge, may have gone too far when he told the BBC's Focus on Africa programme in August 2002 that Uhuru Kenyatta was actually a member of Mungiki.⁶⁶ This opened a barrage of public criticism, with some challenging Uhuru to go public about any links with Mungiki 'because we are being told he is a member' and others censoring the government for giving protection to the movement despite its unlawful activities.⁶⁷ In November 2002, Uhuru denied that he was a member of Mungiki, declaring that 'I am a Catholic and so is my whole family'. He emphasised his distance from Mungiki by recalling an occasion in August 2000 when the sect's members had accused him of being used by the government to harass them, burning his effigy outside his father's mausoleum in Nairobi.⁶⁸

Uhuru's denial was followed by highly publicized police swoops against Mungiki followers in Nairobi and Central Province and the invalidation by the party headquarters of the nomination of Mungiki chairman John Maina Njenga to vie for a parliamentary seat in his Nyahururu home on a KANU ticket.⁶⁹ The nullification of Njenga's nomination sparked protest from Mungiki followers who escorted Njenga in a fleet of 50 vehicles to the Electoral Commission offices in Nairobi.⁷⁰

Nevertheless, Mungiki continued to support Project Uhuru. Whatever damage these measures may have done to individual Mungiki leaders, it was clear that the core of patron-client relations between KANU stalwarts and the movement was not touched. The KANU elite moved quickly to covertly reassure Mungiki and to deepen its relations with the sect's leadership at this hour of need and to encourage it to take a more active role in mobilizing Mungiki members in support of Project Uhuru.⁷¹ As part of its deal, the government aided Mungiki's controversial takeover of the most profitable *matatu* (public taxi) routes to Nairobi's Kayole, Dandora, Huruma and Kariobangi estates, whereby it extorted daily levies from drivers, touts and taxis. In addition to the breakdown of public order that David Anderson has lucidly analyzed,⁷² the government closed its eyes as

65. Amos Kareithi, 'Ndichu now beats retreat on Mungiki', *The East African Standard*, 26 August 2002.

66. 'Banned sect marches for Moi', *BBC News*, 20 August 2002.

67. 'Uproar as MPs claim State protecting Mungiki', *Daily Nation*, 18 October, 2002.

68. 'Kenya: presidential candidate Kenyatta denies links with Mungiki Sect', *East African Standard*, 11 November 2002.

69. '23 Mungiki sect adherents nabbed by police', Kenya Broadcasting Corporation, 22 October 2002; City police nab armed sect members', KBC, 15 October 2002.

70. Njenga had won the nomination by garnering 19,509 against his opponent, Mr. Muruthi, who got 1,331 votes: 'KANU now bars Mungiki aspirant', *The East African Standard*, 28 November 2002.

71. Author's interviews with Mungiki youths in Nairobi, 10 October 2004.

72. Anderson, 'Vigilantes, violence'.

criminal elements within the Mungiki movement stepped up collection of protection money from households in insecure estates and indulged in car-jacking, armed robbery and, to a lesser extent, gun-running activities.⁷³

Although Mungiki's entry into the urban milieu from its pristine origins in rural Kenya ensured that it absorbed many criminal elements within its membership, it was at the peak of the battle for the presidency between July and December 2002 that its criminal element eclipsed its origins as a social movement. Not surprisingly, Uhuru's defeat in the December 2002 elections was perceived as a major threat to the power and prestige of the Mungiki leadership and to the livelihood of some of its urban membership, which thrived on KANU's patronage and on the political economy of public disorder that pervades Kenya's criminal underground.

For Mungiki followers, who still truly believed that Project Uhuru offered a chance for the consummation of the *ituaka* through a generational change of guard, the triumph of Kibaki and the NARC came as a betrayal of the youth and the 'iregi revolution' by their Kikuyu kith and kin. Their frustration found echoes in Mugo-wa-Kibiru's own disillusionment with his contemporaries:

The seer was rejected by the people of the ridges. They gave him no clothes and no food...⁷⁴

Mungiki had already outstripped other groups in acts of violence.⁷⁵ Now, as Kenya crossed to the post-Moi era, it entered a new phase in its metamorphosis, becoming a full-fledged criminal group.

Mungiki's post-election violence

At the new year of 2002/2003, it became clear that Kenya had experienced one of the most significant political changes since independence. NARC's Mwai Kibaki had defeated KANU's Uhuru Kenyatta, and the former opposition had won a comfortable parliamentary majority. This ended Daniel arap Moi's 24-year rule, blamed by many Kenyans for the decline of their living standards.⁷⁶ Obviously, NARC's electoral victory had its critics,⁷⁷ but few

73. 'Mungiki's revenge', *Daily Nation*, 5 April 2004.

74. Ngugi, *The River Between*, p. 21; also author's interview with Mungiki members, Nairobi, 4 May 2004.

75. Mungiki was involved in 60% of all incidents of political violence and hooliganism. See Central Depository Unit, *Monitoring Election Violence: Final report of the 2002 general election* (CDU, Nairobi, 2003), p. 23.

76. Mwai Kibaki scored a landslide victory with 3.65 million or 61% of the presidential vote, whereas his party secured 125 or 60% of 210 seats in the Kenyan parliament. Uhuru Kenyatta gained 1.83 million votes or 31% of nearly 6 million registered votes.

77. Cynics argued that the NARC victory was no more than a change of guard in the palace with little impact on the future, because key players in the party were weaned on the politics of the Moi (and to an extent the Kenyatta) state.

would have predicted the violent response that the electoral outcome would draw, particularly from Mungiki's ultra-militants.⁷⁸ NARC had hardly raised its victory toast when Mungiki struck. On 2 January 2003, Mungiki members were locked in a series of fights with touts over control of *matatu* taxi terminals in Nairobi's Kayole, Buruburu and Dandora estates and parts of Nakuru town. NARC's victory emboldened Mungiki's erstwhile rivals, who took the opportunity to regain control of these lucrative sources of income. On the night of 5 January 2003, Mungiki members killed over ten people in Nakuru's Flamingo and Lake View estates. Two days later, Mungiki militants hacked five people, including a police officer, to death in Nairobi's Dandora Estate.⁷⁹ By February 2003, the government had announced that more than 50 people had died in clashes involving the sect and owners of *matatus*, touts, drivers and their youth supporters.⁸⁰

Mungiki's acts of terror caused consternation within the newly installed NARC government, which saw the hand of KANU behind these attacks as an attempt to undermine the new government.⁸¹ As if to confirm these fears, survivors of Mungiki's terror in Nakuru claimed that their assailants told them that they were avenging the defeat of KANU in the elections, since Nakuru town had voted for NARC.⁸² Mungiki members arrested by the government confessed that a former member of parliament for Nakuru town, David Manyara, aligned to KANU, sponsored Mungiki's Nakuru killings. Apart from convening a secret meeting of 200 Mungiki members in Engarasha village in Subukia to plan the attack, the MP also allegedly provided machetes, axes, clubs and homemade guns to be used during the operation and gave each of the 200 fighters Ksh200–300 (US\$4–5). He was also alleged to be the brain behind the formation of an armed unit made up of 11 platoons and two sections headed by a regional coordinator.⁸³ Even more disconcerting were reports of pro-KANU military forces abetting Mungiki's terrorism by providing vehicles, radios and other logistical support.⁸⁴

78. The percentage of Mungiki members who voted for Uhuru Kenyatta and KANU is difficult to establish. But it is clear that Uhuru and KANU performed extremely well in Central, Rift Valley and Nairobi where Mungiki members were concentrated. Uhuru won over 30% of the presidential votes in Central Province, 53% in the Rift Valley, and 21% in Nairobi, whereas KANU won six seats in Central, almost all in the Mungiki stronghold of Kiambu and 30 in the Rift Valley. Although there were other factors that may have contributed to this performance, the Mungiki youth factor is a major one.

79. 'Five killed in Mungiki mayhem', *East African Standard*, 7 February 2003.

80. 'Profile: Kenya's secretive Mungiki sect', *BBC*, 11 February 2003.

81. Author's interview with a high-ranking civil society leader close to the NARC government, 15 January 2003; *People Daily*, 3 January 2003.

82. 'Residents punished for being NARC supporters', *Daily Nation*, 7 January 2003.

83. James Kutai, 'Mungiki attack deftly planned', *Kenya Times*, 9 January 2003; Watoro Kamau, 'Police parade three Mungiki suspects', *Daily Nation*, 9 January 2003. See also '“Mungiki” murder trial resumes', *Daily Nation*, 9 February 2004; 'Mungiki given murder weapons by former MP', *Daily Nation*, 15 October 2004.

84. See Joseph Karimi, 'Army vehicles “given to Mungiki” had powerful radios', *The East African*, 3 February 2003.

The NARC government wielded a heavy stick against Mungiki. Police swoops nabbed 239 Mungiki adherents in January 2003 alone. Internal Security Minister Chris Murungaru issued a controversial order to the police to shoot Mungiki members on sight. But he also dangled a carrot to the movement by declaring a 30-day amnesty for members who surrendered to the police.⁸⁵ At the end of the amnesty period, the government announced it had arrested and charged 957 Mungiki suspects, 547 in Nairobi, 232 in the Rift valley and 178 in Central Province, whereas only 167 members had surrendered.⁸⁶

Despite this, critics accused the government of taking a softer stance on Mungiki. In the words of one informant, Kibaki's 'Kikuyu' government had woken up to the realization that a full-scale onslaught upon Mungiki members would amount to 'killing our boys'.⁸⁷ Another view is that the government played soft with Mungiki because, at this early stage, it felt a deep sense of vulnerability to Moi loyalists in the armed forces and, therefore, hatched a plot to use Mungiki as a backup force in case these forces decided to strike back.⁸⁸ Whatever the case, violent clashes between Mungiki and other thugs escalated, reaching a dangerous peak by September 2003.⁸⁹ The government soon realized that it had to regain control over the urban space and restore public security and order by instituting comprehensive reforms in the public transport industry, especially the *matatu* sector.

Draining the swamp: Mungiki and transport sector reforms

The public security crisis posed by street fights between Mungiki youths and the *Kamjeshi*⁹⁰ gangs for control of lucrative *matatu* (private taxi) routes in Kenya's cities and towns came to a head from mid-2003. The instrumentalization of disorder in the *matatu* sector had deep roots in the high noon of *Nyayo* autocracy (1982–1990), when the Moi government encouraged KANU youth wingers to take over *matatu* routes and terminals, in a client–patron arrangement which not only enabled KANU to monitor and punish dissent and to assert its authority in public spaces, but more importantly allowed these youthful clients to eke a living by extorting money from commuter buses and taxis, often resulting in violent confrontations with non-KANU youths, drivers and touts. As Matt

85. Faith Muiruri, 'Government calls for truce with Mungiki', *Kenya Times*, 13 January 2003.

86. '957 Mungiki members charged as state amnesty ends', *Daily Nation*, 13 February 2003.

87. Interview with government official, Nairobi, December 2003.

88. Interview, Nairobi, December 2003.

89. 'Mungiki accused over shooting', *Daily Nation*, 30 April 2003.

90. *Kamjesh* is a generic name for youths who hang around *matatu* and bus terminals and collect money to fill it with passengers. 'Matatu: Michuki is right but . . .', *East African Standard*, 4 February 2004; Darren Taylor, 'Wheels come off matatu', *News24.com*, 2 February 2004.

Stevens has shown,⁹¹ the *matatu* culture, identified with youth who served as drivers and touts, became synonymous with chaos and corruption in the social fabric.

In October 2003, Kenya's transport minister, John Michuki, announced sweeping reforms intended to wrest control of the public transport industry from gangs and thugs by imposing formal government control. Kenya's over 50,000 *matatu* operators were expected to fit their vehicles with seat belts, install speed governors to limit speed to a maximum of 80 km per hour, and to limit the number of passenger seats to 13 per vehicle, as opposed to the usual 18–20, by 31 January 2004. Further, the reforms, which came to be known as the 'Michuki laws', required drivers in the public sector and their assistants to obtain a certificate of good conduct from the police and to wear uniforms with badges bearing their names.

The reform of the *matatu* sector threatened to strip Mungiki of one of its main sources of funding. Previously, Mungiki had controlled *matatus* operating on the busy routes to Kayole, Dandora (routes 32 and 42), Huruma (route 46) and Kariobangi (routes 14, 28 and 40) in Nairobi while it also controlled and collected levies from other routes outside Nairobi.⁹² At the peak of its influence, Mungiki is said to have collected at least KSh10,000 [\$125] a day per route, amounting to nearly KSh200,000 (\$2,500) per day from all the routes under its control. The failure of the transport reforms to offer an alternative source of income to Mungiki and other youths forced them to devise alternative strategies for exercising control over and extorting money from the *matatu* sector. Although the government demanded that touts and drivers in the *matatu* sector obtain certificates of good conduct from February 2004, Mungiki stepped up its terror to maintain a firm grip on the most profitable routes and *marimas* (terminals).

Mungiki resorts to terror

Hard on the heels of the transport reforms, on 8 March 2004, the press, citing police sources, announced that a special terror unit known as 'bagation' squad, a corruption or contraction of the words 'no bargain over death', was formed within Mungiki as one of the highest organs in the movement's hierarchy.⁹³ Police sources disclosed that at least 50 young people had entered the hit squad between January and March 2004. The number rose meteorically in the succeeding months.⁹⁴

91. Matt Stevens, 'Breaking down the matatu: personal reflections on what Kenya's cars reveal about its corruption', *Harvard Political Review*, 7 December 2003. Online edition <http://www.hpronline.org/media/paper450/news/2002/04/01/World/Breaking.Down.The.Matatu-220165.shtml>

92. '“Mungiki's” revenge', *Daily Nation*, 5 April 2004.

93. Evelyn Kwamboka, 'How Mungiki trains killers', *The East African Standard*, 8 March 2004.

94. Eliud Miring'uh, 'Hunt for Mungiki followers', *The East African Standard*, 9 March 2004.

The bagation squad consisted of youths in their teens and early twenties who curiously were required to pay between Ksh1,200 and Ksh1,800 [\$15–\$23] before they were allowed to graduate to the ‘prestigious’ and lucrative bagation unit.⁹⁵ The formation of the bagation squad was part of a grand effort by Mungiki to reorganize itself to defend its turf. There is evidence that the movement adopted a cell system of mobilization akin to that of an international terrorist group. It set up an elaborate network covering all of Nairobi’s shanty areas, with platoons operating in the Nairobi slums and hideouts in Mombasa, Murang’a, Nakuru, Nyeri and Laikipia. Once celebrated as a showpiece of efforts by displaced and disinherited Mungiki follows to eke a legitimate living through agriculture,⁹⁶ the movement’s farm in Laikipia district became a ‘State House’, coordinating the training of its fighters away from the view of security forces.⁹⁷

Mungiki’s new terror machine had two main tasks. The first and most important was to secure the movement’s existing sources of funds and devise and execute new fund-raising techniques. Ensuring control over profitable *matatu* routes and terminals was the most important source of funding.⁹⁸ Apart from contributions willingly offered by some drivers who were still members of the sect, the movement was also taking as much as KSh200 from drivers forcefully, intimidating those drivers who refused to cooperate by showing them their guns.⁹⁹ As earlier noted, Mungiki netted millions of Kenya shillings per month from the routes and terminals where it exercised control.

Another source of income was protection money, made possible by the collapse of public security under Moi. Mungiki squads extracted protection money from households and businesses in certain estates to ‘maintain security’ in parts of Nairobi. In Mathare, Mlango Kubwa and St. Teresa’s estate in Eastleigh, Mungiki members demand KSh50 a month from every household. In Mathare slums, the group changed its name to *Wazalendo* (‘patriots’), posing as security agents. Besides protection money, Mungiki also made tens of thousands of shillings from making illegal electric connections from power lines to houses and charging monthly fees of KSh100–300 (\$1.50–\$4.50) to residents.¹⁰⁰ At one point, Mungiki members, determined to occupy any opening in the informal sector by force, frequently invaded *Wakulima* (‘farmers’) market in Nairobi, demanding to take over the loading of goods onto vehicles.¹⁰¹ Mungiki members were

95. Part of the reason for payment is that after graduation they would be in control of major resources and were entitled to a regular income: *Ibid.*

96. Wamue, ‘Indigenous shrines’.

97. ‘“Mungiki’s” revenge’, *Daily Nation*, 5 April 2004.

98. *Ibid.*

99. *Ibid.*

100. *Ibid.*

101. Evelyn Kwamboka, ‘How Mungiki trains killers’, *The East African Standard*, 8 March 2004.

also required to pay one shilling everyday, delivered to the sect's national leaders every month.

Mungiki squads also coordinated a set of high-level criminal activities collectively described as *gutaha* ('raiding'), ranging from armed robbery to carjacking.¹⁰² In fact, some of the household names in Kenya's criminal underworld such as Wucucu and Wanugu — both pseudonyms — are alleged to have some linkages with Mungiki.¹⁰³ Mungiki was also linked to escalating cases of the hijacking of public transport vehicles where passengers were robbed of their money and belongings and stripped of their clothes.¹⁰⁴ Perhaps the only known legitimate source of funding in Nairobi is a poultry farm that some Mungiki members reportedly operated in Kitengela near Nairobi.¹⁰⁵

Money collected by the members from different sources went into paying the salaries of those members who were involved full time in the movement's duties; contributing to the chairman's kitty; purchasing weapons for members, including guns for senior members (*njama*); and, finally, a share went to bribe the government's security system, particularly Mungiki's police collaborators. It is reported that in Dandora estate alone, the group had over 300 guns.¹⁰⁶

A further task was to ensure the cohesion of the movement by protecting leaders and dealing ruthlessly with defectors. The police reported that diehards in the sect were trying to intimidate those who had abandoned it, hence the formation of this dangerous squad for revenge missions.¹⁰⁷ Mungiki's elite bagation squad, which operated from the Riverside area of Nairobi central district, was used by leaders to execute real or imagined adversaries and to collect protection money.¹⁰⁸ Members of the unit were divided into platoons, each with ten members and a leader operating in a Mafia style. These became assassination squads.

Mungiki's war on defectors

From January 2004, Mungiki leaders became increasingly wary as members began to defect in hordes to Christian churches and a few to Islam. A combination of government amnesty, a clampdown on Mungiki, transport reforms and Mungiki's weakening control of resources in the informal sector and criminal underworld induced massive defections. It is

102. Interview with a Mungiki member, July 2004.

103. *Ibid.*, Nairobi, 8 October 2004.

104. Miring'uh, 'Hunt for Mungiki followers'.

105. '“Mungiki's” revenge', *Daily Nation*, 5 April 2004.

106. *Ibid.*

107. Evelyn Kwamboka, 'How Mungiki trains killers', *The East African Standard*, 8 March 2004.

108. Miring'uh, 'Hunt'.

estimated that by mid-2004, about 75% of former Mungiki followers had abandoned the movement.¹⁰⁹ Perhaps one of the most painful defections was that of Mungiki's mercurial national coordinator, Ndura Waruinge, who converted to Christianity and denounced the movement.¹¹⁰ Waruinge, who had been arrested and charged on 17 April 2003, was set free when the prosecution declared that it had no case against him, in what the media satirized as a 'peace bond'.¹¹¹

Mungiki's underground war on defectors started with public harassment and the disappearances of well-known defectors. In January 2004, Mungiki adherents seriously injured four street preachers and chased worshippers with clubs, machetes and swords.¹¹² One defector, David Kabia, went missing on 30 January 2004. Another defector, Jacob Karanja, a preacher and musician, was hijacked in Kariobangi.¹¹³

From early June 2004, Mungiki diehards intensified their acts of terror. As a warning to would-be defectors, they severed the head of a defector, Simon Ndabi Kamore, put it in a paper bag and dumped it at the Overseas Trading Company (OTC) bus stop in Nairobi.¹¹⁴ At the same time, a Mungiki couple, Pastor James Irungu Njenga and his wife Florence Muthoni, were shot dead by gunmen at their Kiamaiko slum home as their three children watched, reportedly because they had openly renounced membership of the movement.¹¹⁵ By July 2004, at least 18 people had reportedly been killed by Mungiki squads, most of them former Mungiki members who had publicly denounced the sect.¹¹⁶ What terrified Mungiki's potential victims, as one defector explained, was the fact that 'when a member is killed, the body will never be found as it would be cut into pieces, packed in a bag and thrown into a nearby river'.¹¹⁷ Mungiki extended its terror to non-members. A 13-year-old school girl, Evelyn Mumbua, was slashed to death by suspected Mungiki diehards who unleashed terror on residents of Nairobi's Mlango Kubwa in Easleigh estate.¹¹⁸

The kidnapping and disappearance of Pastor Jacob Karanja sparked violent demonstrations in Nairobi streets by Mungiki defectors asking for government protection, leading to serious confrontation with the police.¹¹⁹ Former Mungiki members also sought an audience with the national security minister, Chris Murungaru, to seek guarantees for their security.

109. 'War on Mungiki sect "still on"', *Daily Nation*, 21 June 2004.

110. Kwamboka, 'How Mungiki trains killers'.

111. 'Mungiki boss out on a peace bond', *Daily Nation*, 18 April 2003.

112. Lucas Barasa and Paul Udoto, 'Six "Mungiki" defectors arrested', *Daily Nation*, 9 February 2004.

113. "'Mungiki's" revenge', *Daily Nation*, 5 April 2004.

114. Cyrus Kinyungu, 'Mungiki sect members hack girl, 13, to death', *Daily Nation*, 16 June 2004.

115. "'Mungiki's" revenge', *Daily Nation*, 5 April 2004.

116. 'War on Mungiki sect "still on"', *Daily Nation*, 21 June 2004.

117. Barasa and Udoto, 'Six "Mungiki" defectors'.

118. Kinyungu, 'Mungiki sect members hack girl'.

119. Barasa and Udoto, 'Six "Mungiki" defectors'.

Many defectors scurried into hiding or sought safe havens in rural areas, forcing provincial administrators in Nairobi to convene an emergency meeting to discuss the security of Mungiki defectors.¹²⁰

Government clampdown

In response, the government formed a special force, the 'Cobra squad', made up of over 100 officers from five security units drawn from the regular police, the General Service Unit (GSU), the administration police, the Criminal Investigation Department, the Flying Squad and special anti-crime units to try to wipe out the group.¹²¹

The squad had remarkable success in arresting over ten national and regional leaders of the sect during raids in Dandora in Nairobi and Juja in Thika district and extended the net to Embu, Eldoret, Kericho, Nyeri, Nakuru and Machakos town. Dissenters in the sect provided the police with lists of members, a list of contributions made by members and other documents on the group's possessions, enabling the police to make major deprivations on the movement.¹²² Former Nakuru Town MP David Manyara and 12 Mungiki members were arraigned in court on charges of the murder of ten people in Nakuru's Flamingo and Lake View estates in January 2003.¹²³

The police raided Mungiki's headquarters in Nairobi's Mukuru kwa Reuben slum, arresting John Maina Njenga, widely believed to be the sect's spiritual leader.¹²⁴ Njenga was later formally charged with murder and belonging to an illegal society.¹²⁵ On 15 April 2004, police arrested a woman suspected to be leading a gang that circumcises women by force.¹²⁶ Internal Security Minister Chris Murungaru declared 'total war' on the remaining sect members and promised that the government would 'wipe-out' the sect.¹²⁷ Three Mungiki members who had killed a police officer, Constable George Waigwa, on 24 September 2000, were sentenced to life.¹²⁸ These measures seemed to work. By the end of June 2004, Mungiki appeared to be losing the fight and was calling for a truce. On 21 June, Mungiki leaders including the Rift Valley coordinator Kimani Ruo, the national organizing secretary, Njoroge Kamunya, the Nairobi coordinator, Kamau Mwatha, and Nakuru coordinator Kamondo Karuri, appealed to the government for negotiations, asking to meet the Parliamentary Select Committee on National Security and 'be given a chance to defend

120. *Ibid.*

121. *Ibid.*

122. *Ibid.*

123. '“Mungiki” murder trial resumes', *Daily Nation*, 9 February 2004.

124. '“Mungiki's” revenge', *Daily Nation*, 5 April 2004.

125. 'Mungiki boss on murder charge', *The East African Standard*, 9 April 2004.

126. 'Police arrest Mungiki sect leaders', *The East African Standard*, 16 April 2004.

127. 'War on Mungiki sect “still on”', *Daily Nation*, 21 June 2004.

128. 'Mungiki sect suspects get life terms for murder', *Daily Nation*, 15 June 2004.

ourselves and put the record straight'.¹²⁹ These leaders blamed the murders of the perceived Mungiki defectors on what they described as 'rogue Mungiki cartels', revealing splits within the movement especially between the diehards and what these leaders described as 'street preachers and herbalists fighting for supremacy and a bigger pay cheque'.¹³⁰ Further, these leaders claimed that most Mungiki members had reformed and joined the mainstream churches and Islam. The perpetrators of the killings, they claimed, were members of murder groups formed by politicians and former policemen.¹³¹ While reinforcing the argument made elsewhere that Mungiki was not a homogenous group, these claims also revealed intensifying political struggles within and between various factions in NARC over the constitution and the Kibaki succession. It is possible that we are witnessing a realignment of elements inside Mungiki that will again become a factor in the politics of succession ahead of the 2007 elections.

Conclusion

This article has examined how Mungiki used a generational discourse and adopted traditional Kikuyu ideas concerning the transfer of power to challenge their powerlessness and to stake claim to leadership in the politics of Moi's succession. In a sense, Mungiki signified not only a logic of instrumentalization of disorder that has characterized Kenya's multi-party era, but also the effort to re-traditionalize governance in an essentially modern space. However, the movement's leadership was co-opted by the dominant elders in the ruling party and joined the KANU bandwagon in support of Project Uhuru, introducing a violent streak to electioneering. It abandoned its original moral crusade and embarked on reckless violence that eventually undermined its legitimacy and its influence in the public realm. Its continued violence in the post-election era convinced the government of the need to restrain youth as part of its reconstruction agenda and to restore public order and security. This has translated into the bureaucratization of the *matatu* transport sector, identified with the culture of vigilantism and youth violence. While the reform of the public sector coupled with enforcement of the law has effectively contained youth violence and seen the exit of the Mungiki from the public sphere, among other youth groups, the need for generational equity and empowerment will continue to haunt the political elite in the post-Moi era. As scholars announce the 'end of the post-colonial state'¹³² in Africa — meaning that the African state has ceased to resemble its colonial

129. Simon Siele, 'Now Mungiki calls for talks with House team', *Daily Nation*, 22 June 2004.

130. *Ibid.*

131. 'Mungiki sect suspects get life terms for murder', *Daily Nation*, 15 June 2004.

132. Crawford Young, 'The end of the post-colonial state in Africa? Reflections on changing African political dynamics', *African Affairs* 103, 410 (2004), pp. 23–49.

progenitor — it is important to rethink the ideological foundation of the African state that is emerging from the wave of democratic projects. Consequently, this article has argued that the future of the African state lies not only in transforming (moral) ethnicity into the foundational myth of modern African political thought, but also in grounding the state in Africa's multi-ethnic and multi-identity reality. Generational identities are part of this reality.

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