The Ethnicization Of The State And The Crises Of African Development: The Kenyan Experience

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Introduction
Nationalism in modern Africa emerged as a reaction against European domination - a reaction to colonial conquest and rule (Kedourie, 1970). Colonialism is thus the common experience that gave birth to nationalist sentiments amongst Africans. Confronted with this common enemy, diverse groups saw the need to form united fronts and they solidified their feelings of togetherness with the common objective to end colonialism. The struggle for independence created aspirations of nationalism (Sithole, 1959) that seemingly de-ethnicized Africa and amalgamated diverse ethnic and cultural groups which historically existed as separate entities, into nation-states. With such a new outlook and ideological movements that sought to attain and maintain autonomy, unity and identity of social groups (Smith, 1981), peoples in the various African regions began to identify more and more with nation-states.

It does not come as a surprise, therefore, that most African nationalist leaders believed that the imperialist policy of divide and rule had led to conflicting interests among ethnic and racial groups in colonial Africa. Consequently, they viewed nationalist movements that transcended ethnic and race borders as the best remedy that would eventually rid the continent of ethnic sentiments. During the struggle for self-determination, a time when the measure of nationalistic sentiments among Africans seemed to have peaked, we find nationalist leaders successfully appealing to Africans as a whole rather than to ethnic entities. Such feelings (of unity) were so strong among certain nationalists such as Kwame Nkrumah that they even dreamt of a politically united Africa (Day, 1980). Guided by such nationalistic sentiments, therefore, the ethnically and culturally diverse groups in Africa entered independence under the umbrella of nation-states.

With the attainment of independence, post-colonial political leaders vowed to deal ethnicity a deadly blow by substituting it for nationalism. However, their efforts appeared directed at the wrong enemy - ethnic groups, rather than at the real enemy - tribalism and