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The Shield and the Sickle: Kenya–Russia Relations[1] Since 1963

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This chapter seeks to assess certain aspects of Kenya-Russia relations since 1963. Although officially Kenya's foreign policy has always been based on the concept of non-alignment, in practice, her relations with her Western allies, such as Britain and the USA, have always been closer than her relations with Russia or indeed her allies. The chapter seeks to explain the underlying reasons for this state of affairs. It specifically analyses political, economic and socio-cultural aspects of the Kenya–Russia relations since 1963, the year of Kenya's flag independence. In order to trace the reasons for Kenya's lack of enthusiasm in its relations with the East, the following questions are pertinent: What did Kenya's independent foreign policy objectives aim at? Did the ideological and power rivalry manifest in the Cold War politics influence Kenya's foreign policy towards the Eastern bloc? Was Kenya aligned or non-aligned? What is the current state of affairs? These core questions are addressed in-depth using archival and other sources.

Concept of foreign policy

Foreign policy issues are basically oriented towards the national interest. States decide which interests are crucial and must be defended and which can be sacrificed when a state interacts with other states and/or non-state actors. The task for policy formulators is to first articulate the state's interest in the order

[1]In this chapter, the name used to refer to the country is Russia. The Russian state and nationalism played a multifaceted role in the conduct of international relations; firstly, beginning with the Imperial Russia (1682-1917); secondly, the Soviet Republic (1917-22) and Soviet Union (1922-1940); thirdly, the Russian Federation since 1991. For details refer to L.A. Alekseiyeva, *Istorya SSSR* (Moscow: Vishaya Skola, 1985), pp. 67-69.

of merit and importance. This helps to determine the power and/or capability required to implement a foreign policy decision that is to the advantage of the state on whose behalf it is made.

Success in achieving foreign policy objectives depends heavily on a number of variables. These would include good governance, military strength, economic advancement, natural resources, security, acceptance of the country's priorities and clear articulation of policies and bilateral relations and or interactions. However, sometimes there are disagreements among members of a political party or between political parties in a state as to whose interests are best served by focusing government policies on a particular ideology. For instance, following political independence there emerged a debate among some Members of Parliament in Kenya that the country's economic structure was too capitalistic and too dependent on Western multinationals to allow Kenya to call herself non-aligned. Such critics of the country's political orientation, thus, suggested that to redress the imbalance, "Kenya should lean a little to the East". However, those who advanced this school of thought in the 1960s and 1970s were labelled communist by their counterparts.[2] Thus, the 1964-65 debate on foreign policy divided members of the Kenyan parliament along their alleged preference for the Western or the Eastern blocs.

While acknowledging that domestic pressures do influence foreign policy objectives, it must be noted that countries are more likely to overestimate their capability to achieve their objectives. A state's foreign policy and diplomacy should, thus, consider a framework and an atmosphere of security against external aggression. The development of friendly relations with a diversity of state and non-state partners would be a positive step in this process. Firstly, these relationships can be developed through trade, cultural exchange and joint industrial, agricultural and commercial ventures. Secondly, effective diversification of trade partners and donors can reduce the potential for sabotage of the economy by external interest. Diversification is a practical means of exercising non-aligned policy. Thirdly and lastly, foreign policy should focus on maximising technical co-operation between and among African countries and other Third World states. Stronger South African intra-African relations would reduce excessive and precarious dependence on industrialised countries and increase confidence and mutual trust especially among African states.

[2] Cherry Gertzel, *The Politics of Independent Kenya, 1963-1968* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House,1970), pp. 52-53

In the discussion that follows, the role of history and symbols, the ideology and how power rivalry manifested in the Cold War politics influenced Kenya-Russia Relations since 1963 are examined.

History and symbolism of Kenya's and Russia's coat of arms

Kenya's coat of arms,[3] as indeed that of Russia, provides insight into the philosophical foundations for their bilateral and multilateral relations. The post-colonial leadership in Kenya was presumably conscious of the fact that the country must defend herself from foreign domination, first, against neo-colonialism and second, against the communist influences of Russia and/or her allies. The country did not resist domination by the capitalist West, though. Before delving further, the symbols in the two states' coat of arms in relation to Kenya-Russia bilateral relations need to be explained.

The Kenyan coat of arms, traditionally designed on a leather shield and used as an emblem by the government, demonstrates the readiness of every Kenyan in particular and the state in general to protect the country from real or potential dangers. The lion symbol was adopted from the colonial government. For many years, the white settlers in Kenya felt like the lion, king of the jungle. They felt superior and more advanced than those settlers in the rest of East African. Kenyan settlers excelled in the spheres of agriculture, industrial development and communication networks. The settlers in Uganda and Tanzania adopted the symbols of the crown bird and the giraffe respectively. This colonial mentality, generous donor support and the relative political stability in Kenya for the past forty years have helped put Kenya well ahead (diplomatically and economically) of her two East African neighbours.

On the one hand, Kenya's coat of arms has, on either side, a lion grasping in the interior forepaw a spear of estate, the shafts of the spears crossed behind the shield. The whole upon a compartment representing Mount Kenya, the mountain from which the country derives its name and essence.[4] The shield contains the national colours of which black represents the people of Kenya, green, agriculture and national resources; red the struggle for freedom, and white unity and peace. The middle red strip bears a cockerel holding an axe, which according to local customs, heralds the break of a new and prosperous beginning. The shield and

[3] http://www.kenyaarchives.go.ke/emblem.htm site 1 of 2
[4] Ibid

spears symbolise unity and defence of the country's sovereignty. Supporting the shield are two lions—symbols of protection, resting on a background of Mount Kenya and examples of Kenya agricultural produce—coffee, pyrethrum, sisal, tea, maize and pineapples.[5]

On the other hand, the Russian coat of arms bears the sickle and the hammer, which originated from the unique Russian unity of the peasants (the sickle) with the workers (the hammer) who together formed the then Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The red field is a symbol of the blood spilt by workers the world over in the fight for their emancipation. It was directly inherited from the red banner flown at the Paris commune; the original and hitherto "base" symbol of a worker's government flag. The single yellow star is both a representation of the life and immense energy of the sun, empty because within it is the blood or production of workers' struggle and also the five points of the star symbolise the single unity and the outward thrusting orientation of the government—its five points representing the five continents of the Earth.[6]

The post-Soviet Russia since 1991 re-adopted the state emblem and national banner of the epoch of Peter the Great. The golden double-headed eagle upon a red background maintains the historical tradition of chromatic gamut of the coat of arms of the 15th-17th centuries. Above the heads of the eagle there are presented three historical crowns of Peter the Great as symbols of sovereignty under new circumstances both in the Russian Federation as a whole and in its autonomous republics, so called subjects of the federation. In its claws the eagle has sceptre and orb as embodiment of state power and the unity of the independent states. On its breast there is a raider striking a dragon with a lance. This is one of the oldest symbols of the struggle of good against evil, light against gloom, the symbol of defence of fatherhood.[7]

The reinstatement of the double-headed eagle in Russia's coat of arms signifies continuity of national history[8]. Its main elements are absolutely traditional. It reflects different periods of Russia history and develops them on the eve of the new millennium. Do the emblem symbols portray the national characteristics in the Kenya–Russia relations? Yes. The lukewarm Kenya-Russia relations continuously reflect the Kenyan elites' (shield), fears of the peasant (sickle) whose appeal for workers' unity in the fight for their rights is opposed to the capitalists appeal for dialogue, strike notices and industrial courts for arbitrations. The five

[5] http://www.kenyaarchives.go.ke/emblem.htm site 1 of 2
[6] http://www.rf.boom/eng.html site 1 of 2
[7] Ibid
[8] http://www.allyoucanread.com/flag_large.asp?id=141

points of the star claiming representation of Soviet-Russian government in five continents raised suspicion of the communist intentions in Kenya in particular and the world in general.

Also the reinstatement of a double-headed eagle of national emblem signifies continuity of Russian national history, dominated by support for socialist revolutions and Russification of neighbouring and distant states, such as Ukraine, Belarus, Armenia, Georgia, Poland, the Baltic States and Finland, some of which were emancipated by the 1917 revolution. Later some were again incorporated into the Soviet Union satellite states or the Warsaw Pact block at the end of World War II (1945). These scenarios known by Kenyans or briefed by her Western partners have spread real or imagined fears among Kenya's policy makers for the last forty years. This is the dilemma of the shield and the sickle, in any meaningful Kenya-Russia bilateral relations.

Kenya's foreign policy and diplomacy in perspective

What did the foreign policy of post-colonial Kenya aim at from the onset? The basis of Kenya's foreign policy is found in three KANU documents, namely the 1960 Constitution and the manifestos of 1961 and 1963[9]. In the constitution, four of the stated aims are related to the country's foreign policy, among them a commitment to vigilantly safeguard national interests and work with other nationalist democratic movements in Africa and other continents to eradicate imperialism, colonialism, racialism and all other forms of racial discrimination and oppression. In addition, Kenya would join with other members to promote and consolidate "international peace and peaceful settlement of international disputes". Finally, a KANU government would work with other African leaders to foster closer association of African territories and states by promoting unity of action among the peoples of Africa.

Katete Orwa sums up these documents as follows:

> These documents reveal an obvious realism. The aims are couched in moderate tones. Collective actions through multilateral organisations in handling international disputes were preferred to unilateral or violent approach. Even on the issue of African unity, the documents do not refer to African federation but to unity of action.[10]

[9] KANU Constitution, 1960, pp 1-2; KANU manifesto of 1961, p.3 and 1963, p.17.

[10] D. Katete Orwa, "Foreign Policy, 1963-1986" in W.R. Ochieng, ed., *A Modern History of Kenya 1895-1980* (Nairobi, Evans Brothers Limited, 1989), pp. 220-222.

The 1961 and 1963 KANU manifestos followed the tone of the Constitution, suggesting a degree of consistency in the thinking of leaders. Furthermore, party leaders resolved not to pursue "aggressive" policies or harbour imperialistic intentions against Kenya's neighbours. The country sought a defence strategy with other African countries, with particular emphasis on "an East African Defence Policy," so that neighbouring countries could work together to maintain regional stability.[11]

By 1963, Kenyan leaders had accepted the necessity of upholding the pre-independence "status quo" in Eastern Africa. The KANU Election Manifesto (1963) declared that Kenya would "build on the foundation of the East African Common Services Organisation and the East African Common Market, to bring the people of Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika and Zanzibar into closer political co-operation."

Kenya believed that the continuity of colonial projects would develop Kenya and the Eastern Africa region as a whole. On that basis, it seems to have been felt that attempting to lean to the East would be suicidal. The colonial economic policy which had encouraged foreign private investment in Kenya would remain unchanged, while local private investment and state participation in the economy would receive governmental support[12]. Thus, in East Africa no radical changes were expected. Instead, evolutionary changes would be embraced.

On the continental policy, KANU adopted an anti-colonialist policy, committing the country to the support of liberation movements. Kenya agreed to work together with other African countries towards the realisation of "continental unity"[13]. In the final analysis, non-alignment would constitute the basis of Kenya's global policy, with the state offering friendship to every country that would reciprocate. Her policy of non-alignment did not mean neutrality in international affairs. It meant, support for what the country considered being right, and judging each case "on its merit."[14]

Kenya chose to be guided by a number of principles in the conduct of her foreign policy and diplomacy that antagonistic blocs termed as "a hindrance" to development of world peace and welfare. To this end, the country adopted the principle of non-alignment in international affairs.[15] This ideology guaranteed

[11] KANU manifesto (1961), 3; (1963), 17.
[12] KANU manifesto (1963), 17, 23, 24; (1961), 14-15.
[13] KANU manifesto (1961), pp. 28-9; 1963 p.26.
[14] KANU manifesto (1961), 28-30; (1963), 27-28.
[15] D.K. Orwa, "Non-alignment; the East African Perspective," in L. Adele Jinadu and I. Mandaza, eds., *African Perspectives on Non-Alignment* (Harare AAPS, 1986).

Kenya her rights to independence and sovereignty. Logically, Kenya postulated the principle of "positive independence", which expressed the country's determination to be an effective actor in world affairs and her opposition to "imperialism, neo-colonialism, racialism, and all other forms of foreign or national oppression".

Internal and regional conditions produced the principle of a regional status quo, from which emerged the policy of "good neighbourliness." To this was tied an economic ideology known as African socialism, which purported to reflect "Western Capitalism and Eastern Communism."[16] From these principles, three levels of policy became clear and were adopted. Firstly, it centred on global issues, which come under the general policy of non-alignment. Secondly, it focused on continental affairs, and thirdly, the attachment and maintenance of regional stability.

Activities at all these levels sought specific objectives that formed "core" national interests as listed in K.J. Holsti's work.[17] These interests comprise territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty and national security. Also connected to these are the "middle range" objectives—economic, cultural and commercial relations, diplomatic representations and political influence[18].

The government took its stand on the principle that Kenya must remain independent and non-aligned, but should prepare to establish such economic and political relations with other states as the country's interests demanded. Such was a fundamental commitment of the African Socialism that formed the basis of the overall government's policy. Mboya reaffirmed this in September 1964 when he stated;

> We have declared ourselves for African Socialism and this means Sir, we have chosen against Western capitalism and we have also chosen against Eastern communism.[19]

The Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965 emphasised the need, "to avoid making development in Kenya dependent on a satellite relationship with any country or group of countries", but at the same time pointed out that "economic non-alignment implies a refusal to participate in world affairs".[20] To achieve that goal, the "conservatives" captured the party organisation and controlled the parliamentary group. Kenyatta supported them by his decision to hold the

[16] Republic of Kenya, Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965 (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1965); Orwa, "Non-alignment," p.42; KANU manifesto, 1969 p.22.
[17] K.J. Holsti, *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1967), p.132.
[18] Ibid; p.132
[19] Gertzel, The Politics of Independent Kenya, pp.51-52.
[20] Republic of Kenya, Sessional paper No. 10 of 1965.

convention. The country's political, economic and foreign policy orientation turned pro-West and the Kenya-Russia bilateral relations were looked at from the eyes of the radicals. The East-West Cold War politics was entrenched in Kenya since then.

Critics have however argued that Kenya's existing economic structure and her relationships with Western countries established a commitment to the West, which resulted in her being dominated by the Western powers. They observed that the country's economic structure was too capitalistic and too dependent on Western multinational companies and, therefore, did not justify her claims to a non-aligned policy. To redress this problem some Members of Parliament suggested that Kenya should "lean a little more to the East",[21] a modest proposal rejected by the government and majority backbenchers who obviously feared an inclination to the Eastern bloc. The debate on foreign policy, therefore, divided Kenya's parliamentarians in terms of their preference for the Western or the Eastern countries and influenced greatly Kenya's foreign policy orientation.

Russia's foreign policy: a global perspective

In one of the most influential articles written in the field of Russian foreign policy studies, George Kennan[22] sought to explain Moscow's global foreign policy in terms of the totalitarian structure of her political system and her revolutionary Leninist heritage. He argued that the Russian political regime lacked internal sources of legitimacy yet made severe political and economic demands on its citizens that could not be sustained by any means. This led the Russian leaders to focus on the revolutionary Leninist regime. Therefore, it is argued, the repressive and illegitimate political institutions of the Russian state produced a foreign policy focused upon the external revolutionary socialist mission and the presence of a hostile capitalist international system. This focus, in turn, produced expansionist Russian foreign policies.

Lenin explained Russia's hostile relations with the West in terms of falling profits and insufficient domestic demand endemic in capitalist economic systems and its political guise in the form of the nation-state. He saw war, expansionism of the great powers, and their hostility towards socialist countries emanating

[21] Republic of Kenya, Official Report, House of Representatives, First Parliament, second edition, vol. III, part III, 11 September 1964, col. 2314.

[22] George Kennan, "The sources of soviet conduct", *Foreign Affairs* (July 1947), reprinted in *Foreign Affairs* 65 (Spring 1987), pp 852-868.

from there. This regime-type theory of Russia's foreign policy implies a degree of continuity in Russia's foreign policy since 1917[23].

Some scholars explain change in Russia's foreign policy beginning with Stalin's death.[24] Stalin's demise, it is argued, changed the system from totalitarianism to a more transformative policy. The end of political terror meant that the Russian political elite was more secure and promoted the development of a competitive political process with attendant effects on foreign policy[25].

Dennis Ross, however, characterised the post-Stalinist political regime as an oligarchy in which the Russian elite valued personal and bureaucratic security. The processes of the post-Stalinist Russian state favoured consensus decision making and elite political coalition. Emphasis was laid on a foreign policy of caution and risk aversion. Ross argues that this produced a policy of cautious opportunism. [26] Some foreign policy analysts argue that the persistence of Stalinist political institutions in a political environment where coalition politics mattered and new political groups made demands on the leadership produced "offensive détente" and "over-committed, contradictory policies".[27]

It is worth noting that change in domestic political constraints played a role in explaining Nikita Khrushchev's intervention in Hungary in 1956, near intervention in Poland in 1956, and the decision to deploy nuclear missiles to Cuba in 1962.[28] The incentives for an expansionist foreign policy grew in Leonid Brezhnev's period. He intervened in the Middle East by the late 1960s, Czechoslovakia in 1968, and tremendously worked on Russia's Third World interventionism in the 1970s.

Mikhail Gorbachev's new thinking in foreign policy on the other hand focused on domestic political and institutional changes beginning in 1987. The desire to develop a new Russian foreign policy led Gorbachev to reform the Russian domestic political system. Moscow's withdrawal from Afghanistan and acceptance of change in Eastern Europe were accomplished because Gorbachev

[23] Celeste A. Wallander, "The sources of Russian Foreign Policy after the Cold War" in John M. Olin, ed., *Critical Issues series* (West View Press, 1996), p4.
[24] Alexander Dallin, "The Domestic Sources of Soviet Foreign Policy" in Seweryn Bialer, eds., *Domestic Context of Soviet Foreign Policy* (Boulder: West View Press, 1981) pp.348-353.
[25] Dennis Ross, "Risk Aversion in Soviet Decision Making", in Jiri Valenta and William Potter, eds., *Soviet Decision Making* (Boston: George Allan and Unwin,1984), p.242.
[26] Jack Snyder, "The Gorbachev Revolution: A Warning of Soviet Expansion?" *International Security* 12 (Winter 1987/88): 93-131; pp 94,104.
[27] Arnold L. Horelick and Myron Rush, *Strategic power and Soviet Foreign Policy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964).
[28] Mathew Evangelista, "Sources of Modernization in Soviet Security Policy," in Philip E. Tetlock et al., eds., *Behaviour, Society, and Nuclear War, Vol.2.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991); Snyder, "Gorbachev Revolution".

had succeeded in altering the political and institutional constraints on reformist directions in Russia's foreign policy[29]. It is probable that these changes must have had some influence on Kenya's ideological orientation.

Russia's Third World foreign policy

Russia conducted multifaceted relations with the Third World. These ties included close political and economic links, and diplomatic and commercial ties. The changes in post-war international politics contributed to Russia's rethinking of the Third World's crucial role in the international system.[30] Formal diplomatic relations were established with many non-industrial states and they preferred economic and military aid to several others.

In their prescriptive strategies to transform the traditional society to a modern one, they formulated the National Democratic State (NDS) in 1960. These states maintained close economic and cultural ties with the socialist bloc and pursued a pro-Soviet foreign policy.[31] It implied that Moscow would pressure these governments to accept communist participation. However, there emerged inherent difficulties and for practical purposes was replaced, by 1963, with a new theoretical construct, the non-capitalist path (NCP). The NCP described as a means of passage from that stage of social, economic development, on which by non-capitalist means, the necessary preconditions for the transition to the construction of socialism was to be created. The NCP amounted to a pro-Russia foreign policy combined with anti-capitalist or non-capitalist domestic development programmes.

Foreign assistance was a tool of cultivation for both Russians and the West. However, the Russians charged that Western aid would subvert the independent (anti-imperialist) positions of the non-industrial states. They claimed that Russian aid would be provided with no strings attached. In the Russian worldview, the domestic transformations reinforced the foreign policy orientations and vice versa.[32] However, ideological controversy arose over how forward thinking these states and their leaders actually were. Apparently, those opposed to the dispensation of political and economic support questioned the class origins of the Third World leadership.

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[29] Carol R. Saivetz and Sylvia Woodby, Soviet – Third World Relations (Boulder and London: Westview Press, 1985) p.9.

[30] R.A. Ulianovskii, Sotsializm, i Osvobodivshiesia Strany (Moscow: iz Nauka, 1972 p.4).

[31] Oded Eran, *The Mezhdunarodniki: An Assessment of Professional Expertise in the making of Soviet Foreign Policy* (Israel: Turtle Dove Press, 1979).

[32] Ibid

In 1963, Khrushchev introduced a new term, "revolutionary democrat", to refer to non-communist nationalists who, because of their experience with imperialism, shared Marxist hostility towards capitalism. Russians believed that "revolutionary democrats" would gradually become full-fledged Marxist-Leninists, who would eventually convert their states into socialist spheres of influence. Gamal Abdul Nasser, Ahmed Ben Bella, Kwame Nkrumah (hang), among others received Lenin prizes and became part of the cultivation process.

The Russian leadership, with the acquisition of new military capabilities, influenced the course of events in the Third World.[33] They revised their military doctrine to fit the escalation factors in local conflicts. This gave the Russians an excuse to intervene either directly or by arms trans-shipments in a number of regional conflicts. It was stressed that military aid and the presence of military advisors must be complemented by purges of untrustworthy military personnel, reorganisation, and indoctrination. The last prescription entailed political education programmes, frequently under Russia's direction.[34] Party building was recommended as the way to institutionalise progressive development.

The experiences of Ghana, Mali and Egypt bear witness to the fact that without creating vanguard parties, it is impossible to resolve completely the tasks of the national democratic revolution, or to guarantee the stability of revolutionary democratic regimes.[35]This is how Russia-Third World relations was tailored up to the end of the Cold War in 1989.

Since the collapse of communism, Russia is still struggling to re-frame her foreign relations with the rest of the world. Kenya, in these ideological dynamism, remains in both the East-West agendas because of the new global threat of terrorism. These ideological concerns will continue triggering debate on the role of the Odinga-Mboya airlifts of the 1960s.

The Russia–Africa foreign policy of cautious détente (1965-73)

Nikita Khrushchev was removed from office in October 1964 as a result of both domestic and foreign policy failures. His successors, Leonid Brezhnev and Alexei Kosygin, worked hard to present a new image to the world.[36] In the 1965-1973

[33]Saivetz and Woodby, Soviet Third World Relations, p.13.
[34] Ibid
[35]Ibid, pp. 44-45.
[36] Ibid., p.56.

period, Russia-Africa relations were shaped by military coups which became a persistent feature of Third World politics. A profound setback was spelt by the demise of carefully cultivated and seasoned/celebrated nationalist leaders (Nkrumah in Ghana, and Keita in Mali), and the Chinese involvement in Africa's liberation movements. However, Russia did gain through military regimes that did profess an interest in Russia's assistance, in Somalia, Sudan and Uganda.[37]

African regimes in general, both military and civilian, increasingly became single-party or highly personalistic in nature. Almost all were troubled by separatist movements or were plagued by serious internal ethnic divisions.[38] By the late 1960s, the Russians had shifted to a more cautious orientation that would associate Moscow with the position of OAU in favour of strict observance of existing borders. This approach was meant to cultivate new allies among the independent African states.[39] In Sudan, Russia made gains in 1968 when trade, military and technological assistance agreements were concluded, but the communist-backed unsuccessful coup in 1971 made Russia-Sudan relations frosty.[40]

In Somalia, the regime of General Siad Barre, which took power in the 1969 coup enabled Russia to construct extensive port facilities at Berbera, the Horn of Africa.[41] In East Africa, the Russians found a friend in Idi Amin Dada who toppled Milton Obote as head of state in Uganda in 1971. He displayed an interest in Russian military assistance and a number of trade agreements, and assistance pacts were concluded in 1972 and 1973. In Tanzania, the government accepted only small Russian credit in 1966, as did Zambia in 1967. The pro-Russian radical wing of KANU restricted possibilities of improved relations with the Kenyan government. The "frontline states" (Tanzania, Kenya, Zambia and Botswana) preferred multilateral approaches to aid for Zimbabwean liberation fighters. None of these states was particularly hospitable to a Russian role in the Zimbabwe independence struggle. The frontline states had supported Biafra during the Nigerian civil war, while Russia supported the central government. Moscow, therefore, acted opposite of these states.

The chapter, now delves into Kenya–Russia relations in the following two phases: the colonial period and post-colonial period (since 1963).

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[37] Saivetz and Woodby, Soviet Third World Relations, p.57
[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid.
[40] Ibid., p.58
[41] Ibid.,p.59

Kenya-Russia relations during the colonial era

The earliest known Kenya-Russia contact is that period dubbed as Kenyatta's Moscow years 1929 and 1932-33.[42] Kenyatta was in Moscow advancing Kenya's grievances against British colonialism. This, he did by attending international labour conferences as he pursued studies at the University of the Toilers of the East in Moscow. He visited Moscow first in 1929 from London, in what looked generally like an orientation safari, and to attend the international labour conferences in particular, organised by industrial workers. His second visit (1932-1933) was connected mainly with his studies at the University of the Toilers of the East, known otherwise as "Komunisticheskaya Universiteta Trudiashisha Vastoka (KUTV) or Far East University".

Kenyatta, in Russia, was regarded as a symbol of liberation movements in Africa and, in particular, Kenya. He coordinated and established contacts with various international and regional anti-imperialist movements such as the Fabians, Troskyists, Marxists, Labourists and Unionists. It was through such contacts that he, on his way back to London from Moscow in 1929, met George Padmore, the man who was responsible for his second visit (1932-33).

Kenyatta became attracted only to aspects of Marxism that were meaningful to his experiences in Kenya, e.g. the more systematic and vigorous withering away of the state.[43] His strategy to implement the welfare system of state — subsides in public institutions, such as hospitals and school, in post-colonial Kenya must have been influenced by his Moscow years. However, he was disappointed by the Marxists for downplaying racialism and ethnicity, aspects which would disrupt nationhood. He discovered that the communists in Moscow did not trust him because he had been in Britain and was perhaps a British spy.[44]

When Kenyatta returned to Kenya after World War II, the realities of African nationalism and the struggle for independence in Kenya influenced his participation more than the rhetoric of liberal democracy and Marxism. However, his Moscow years had a bearing on Kenya's future foreign policy and diplomatic orientation towards the Soviet Union and the entire Kenya-Ost Politik.[45]

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[42] Kurgat, Paul K., "Kenyatta's Moscow Years 1929; 1932-33 and the Struggle for Kenya's Independence", Moi University, School of Social Cultural Seminar paper, 2002.
[43] D.I. Suchkov, "Keniata Vmoskve", in Journal Vastok, No. 4, 1993, p.109.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.

Kenya-Russia relations since 1963

Following Kenya's political independence, on 12 December 1963, the Central Committee of the Soviet Republic (CKSR) sent a high powered delegation headed by the Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs, Comrade S.G. Lapin, which forwarded a congratulatory telegram to the then Prime Minister, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta. The telegram read in part:

> *Honourable Prime Minister, allow me to congratulate you on this historic occasion of your country – the independence day ... we wish you and the people of Kenya the very best of luck in the strengthening of your economic and political independence ... The Soviet government recognizes Kenya as an independent and sovereign state ... we hereby express our readiness to establish bilateral relations and exchange diplomats at the level of Ambassadors ... we believe that between USSR and Kenya, there will develop friendship in all spheres based on the principle of peaceful co-existence.*[46]

It is evident from the wordings of the telegram that the Russians wooed Kenya to a warm bilateral relations right from the onset of Kenya's independence and hoped that the relations would cover economic, socio-cultural and political spheres.

The soviet delegation demonstrated Moscow's will and enthusiasm towards the development of the two states' nascent bilateral relations. Kenyatta held discussions with the delegation and reached an agreement that Nairobi and Moscow would establish diplomatic relations at the Ambassadorial level. A communiqué was reached and signed three days after independence, on 15 December 1963[47].

Kenya's Ambassador to Russia, Adala Otuko, arrived in Moscow on 2 January 1964 and his counterpart, Vladimir S. Lavrov arrived in Nairobi on 10 March 1964. Lavrov met Kenyatta on the 17 March and Odinga on the 18 March.[48] Kenya and Russia agreed to develop trade and technical, economic and cultural cooperation. In addition, the two agreed to exchange opinions on important international issues so as to widen contacts between different social organisations from both countries.

In a follow up, the Kenyan Government sent a high-powered delegation to Moscow (18 April–12 May 1964) headed by Vice-President Oginga Odinga. At

[46] F.Ilicher, Ministry of Foreign Affairs – USSR and African Countries 1963-1990. Part 1 (Moscow, Politzdat, 1982), p.67; see also Pravda, 12th December, 1963.
[47] Ibid., p.70; see also Pravda, 15th December, 1963
[48] V.A.Pochevskii, Vnyeshnaya Politiki Kenia, (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnaya Atnashenia, 1987), 1967-8.

the end of the Moscow visit, a joint Kenya-Russia official communiqué was issued, in which Russia committed herself to help finance several Kenyan projects, give credit facilities, and build and equip today's Nyanza General Hospital, popularly known as the "Russian Hospital". The communiqué emphasised the need to advocate peaceful co-existence of states. It also spelt out the need to forge a common front on the question of destruction and eradication of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and the eradication of colonialism and neo-colonialism in all its forms. All these political decisions toned well with the KANU declarations as spelt out in the 1963 manifesto.

The communiqué paved the way for the Russian professionals to come and work in Kenya beginning 11 July–14 August 1964.[49] In July 1964, a special government committee under Oginga Odinga was formed to coordinate work, aimed at realising the resolutions of the Kenya–Russia communiqué of 11 May 1964.[50] The membership included Minister for Agriculture Bruce Mackenzie, Minister for Trade and Industry Gikonyo Kiano, Minister for Natural Resources Lawrence Sagini and Minister for Information Achieng Oneko. However, the committee did not seem to have done much, but, from then onwards, Kenya-Russia relations underwent several phases. These included ministerial party, diplomatic, trade delegations and cultural exchanges.

In 1964 alone, three Kenya Cabinet ministers visited Moscow. Njoroge Mungai of Health and Housing Ministry in May 1964 and Lawrence Sagini, Minister for Natural Resources in the summer of 1964. That summer of 1964 also witnessed the arrival in Moscow of the Kenyan trade unionists and community representatives.

The Kenya-Russia relations were further strengthened by the following bilateral agreements: the Nairobi trade agreement of April 1964; the Moscow cultural and technical cooperation agreement of 11 May 1964; the Nairobi agreement on economic, and technical cooperation and a linkage between Telegraphic Agency of the Soviet Union (*Telegrafnoye agentstvo sovetskogo soyuza—Tass*) and Kenya News Agency (KNA) of 20 November 1964.

The economic and technical cooperation agreements gave Kenya a credit of 40 million roubles including credit goods worth 13 million roubles. The Russians fulfilled their pledge to build a hospital as a gift to the government and the people of Kenya, in an agreement signed on 20 November 1964.[51] The 200-bed hospital,

[49] V.A.Pochevskii, Vnyeshnaya Politiki Kenia, (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnaya Atnashenia, 1987), 1967-68.
[50] Ibid
[51] Kenya National Archive (KNA) – BY/24/7 New Russian Hospital 1967.

with a capacity of 100 outpatients daily was finally built in Kisumu. These facilities, funded by the Russian government were meant to bring closer (Kenya-Russia) bilateral relations, at a time when the Cold War politics had polarised the world.[52]

The Russians continued to participate actively in the subsequent independence anniversaries and, in particular, the first anniversary of independence (1964). That same day, the delegation, in the company of Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, participated in the official opening of the Patrice Lumumba Institute charged with the training of party cadres and labour officials in Nairobi.

It is evident that Kenyatta's administration actively but cautiously engaged Russia and other socialists countries, such as Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and China in the early 1960s as partners in development. However, Kenya-Russia relations met a lot of resistance in 1965, when the conservative political elites took charge of the ruling party (KANU) and government apparatus. The government, therefore, started to slow and scale down the implementation of Kenya-Russia agreements.[53]

Nevertheless, one of the most influential ministers leaning to the conservative group, Tom Joseph Mboya, travelled to Moscow on 18 February 1966.[54] His mission was to explain to the Russians why Kenya was delaying the implementation of some of the bilateral agreements. While in Moscow, Mboya argued that the tender to irrigate the Kano rice scheme could not be awarded to the Russians because an English expert had advised them to carry out the project on a regional (East Africa) basis and that some Western investors had been identified to carry out the regional project in what would be implemented in a record eighteen months.[55]

This was followed by the worsening of Kenya-Russia relations in the mid-1960s. The Kenya government closed down the "Sovexpot filma" and kicked out Tass and Pravda correspondents.[56] She went on to recall and replace Ambassador Adala Otuko from Moscow in October 1966. The above actions were preceded by polarisation of Kenyan parliamentarians into two groups: the conservative pro-West, and the radical pro-Russia and Eastern Europe.

The parliamentary groupings inside and outside parliament, greatly impacted on the country's future foreign policy orientation towards Russia. The public

[52] Kenya National Archive (KNA) – BY/24/7 New Russian Hospital, 1967.
[53] Pochevskii, Vnyeshnaya Politika Kenia, p.70.
[54] Pochevskii, Vnyeshnaya Politika Kenia.
[55] Gertzel, Government and Politics in Kenya, p.585.
[56] Ibid., p.72.

conflicts arising out of policy disagreements were primarily between the KANU Government and its own backbench.[57] This was to later engulf the entire Parliamentary group and other senior members of the party. First, the pro-East hard-core critics challenged government policy concerning the economy in which large-scale farming and modern industry had developed, and which was still dominated by Europeans and Asians. It was argued that this control enabled the capitalist West in particular to exert too much influence over the country's affairs. Second, they expressed concern over the slow pace of Africanisation. Third, they were concerned with the rapid replacement of the existing white rich class by a nascent black political elite that was assuming the same class position and which was a creation of the Kenyatta government.

The radicals rejected the colonial economy, demanding greater participation of the citizens, through state and cooperative enterprises and greater nationalisation of the public economic sector.[58] This strategy, according to them, would create an egalitarian society in which full economic opportunity would be open to a larger section of the population. They completely rejected uncontrolled acquisition of property by one group, the privileged elite, at the expense of the rest of the population. The conservatives, by contrast, laid greater emphasis on private enterprise and the stimulation of individual efforts rather than on public enterprise as the basis for economic development. This view was articulated elaborately in Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965.[59]

The disbanding of KADU in 1964, which represented the moderate position on the pursuit of political independence had the effect of enlarging the conservative element within the ruling KANU parliamentary group. It stimulated increased rivalry for leadership, especially of the backbench group, which the radicals had dominated. As a result, the conservative element in KANU combined with the former KADU members to oust their radical rivals from official parliamentary posts (speakers, clerks, whips, etc) and chairpersons in the various parliamentary select committees.[60] This trend, coupled with the old rivalry between Mboya and Odinga, continued to impact on government politics and policy orientations, as divisions were polarised around these two supremos. Politicians increasingly became linked with the one or the other of the two policy strands within KANU: Odinga with that of the radicals, Mboya with that of the conservatives.

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[57] Gertzel, Government and Politics in Kenya, p.585.,p.72
[58] Ibid., p.56.
[59] Republic of Kenya, Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965.
[60] Gertzel, Government and Politics in Kenya, p.57

The origins of this identification lay in attitudes attributed to them in years before independence. While Mr Odinga had publicly shown his preferences for the East and adopted a more populist stand on domestic policies, Mboya had been associated in people's minds with the West. This dichotomy was given much sharper focus in the 1964-1965 public debates.[61] Odinga frequently used public forums to brush political elites. At a Mombasa rally in July 1964, he suggested that the government should give undeveloped lands to the poor to farm. In February 1965, at another Mombasa rally, he announced that the government would introduce a limit to the amount of land an individual could buy or own, and in March 1965, he suggested that European farms and businesses should be bought by companies and cooperatives, rather than individuals, in order to create a classless society.[62] In April 1965 at another KANU rally in Kimilili, he supported a resolution on nationalisation.[63] In May 1965 in Kisumu, he announced that Kenya would become a socialist state as soon as possible.[64]

Odinga's leadership style and public statements implied a more radical approach particularly on land than official policy acknowledged, and they brought him increasingly into more political conflict with his cabinet colleagues. His arguments and proposals were taken up first and foremost by Mboya, who arrogated to himself the role of party and government spokesman. In 1965, he made a series of public statements that clearly and consistently antagonised Odinga and the radicals on the grounds that they had departed from party policy. He clearly and vigorously enunciated the official government policy of African socialism, based on a mixed economy and with a strong individualism interjected by state control to ensure fair distribution of wealth and equality of opportunity that the government promised.

While addressing another mammoth rally in Kisumu in May 1965, Odinga attacked Mboya's alleged association with the West and his influences on Kenyan politics.[65] These attacks and Mboya's call for Odinga's resignation from Parliament, put the rivalry between Mboya and Odinga at the centre of the political arena, and linked it directly with the dispute over government policies between radicals and conservatives. However, over time the government dealt a crippling blow to the radical wing of KANU.

[61] Gertzel, Government and Politics in Kenya, p.57
[62] The East African Standard, 14th December 1964; 23rd March 1965.
[63] The East African Standard, 22nd June 1965
[64] Daily Nation, 30th April 1965.
[65] The East African Standard, 8th July 1965.

By 1964, the radicals had no organisation within which to either present a common front or influence government and party policies. However, they staged a final show in 1965, when all KANU branch officials were brought together at the Lumumba Institute for a course in party management and organisation.[66] They used the institute's forum to publicise their views. The institute had officially been opened by Kenyatta in December 1964. Its official founders were Kenyatta, Odinga and Kaggia, who was Chairman of the Management Board. Financed largely with Russian funds, and staffed by a sizeable number of Russian lecturers, the institute appeared to be heavily biased in favour of the radical arm of KANU. The radicals also dominated the Board of Management and drew up the institute's curriculum. Mboya steered out of the institute's affairs.

During the 1964-65 period, the Lumumba Institute students set themselves up as a pressure group demanding from government both radical policy changes and party reforms. The radicals rejected Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965, which they argued was because it did not fully embrace scientific socialism. The Lumumba Institute students attempted, in July 1965, to take over KANU headquarters in Nairobi and put their own nominees into national office.[67] The conservative, faced by the leftist student politics, using their influence in parliamentary affairs, passed a private member's motion at the end of April 1965, urging the government to tactfully amend the Ministry of Education Act and take over the institute.[68] The motion was passed and the institute subsequently ceased to function. Cherry Gertzel sums up the scenario as follows;

> The evidence suggests that the tactful use of communism, to discredit the radicals reflected certain genuine fears of communism and an ideological side to the debate nonetheless genuine though it was based on a considerable confusion of ideas. The debate on the merit of capitalism and socialism confused the economic, political and social issues at stake; but at the same time it revealed that the fears expressed about communism were by no means entirely insincere.[69]

Talk of communism had been introduced into Kenyan politics by the European settler community after World War II. In both official and unofficial circles they talked about the possibility of communist interference in domestic

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[66] Gertzel, The Politics of Independent Kenya, p.65

[67] Ibid., p.65

[68] Republic of Kenya, Proceedings of the Legislative Council, Vol. LXVII, Tenth Council, Fifth Session, Second and Third Meetings, 6th March 1956, Col. 394 and Vol. LXIX.

[69] Gertzel, Government and Politics in Kenya, p.69.

politics.[70] The subject was raised twice in the Legislative Council in the 1950s. The settlers associated the African political leadership with communism opposed to Western ideas.[71] To edge off the radical group, the conservatives used the scare of communism to turn the strong attachment of Africans to the land against their rivals. These tactics were first used in the 1965 senate by-elections, which were essentially a contest between radical and conservative wings of KANU for popular support. Several candidates sought to associate communism in the public mind with a challenge to property and so to arouse fears of their opponents who belonged to the radical group. Ukambani's Kitui KANU candidate manifesto stated in brief; "...Reject he who brings communism to Kenya. Communism means *shambas* (land) and all possessions belong to the government. Wives are communal, and the government takes children after birth".[72]

This was propaganda "par excellence". However, his opponent ignored the accusation and based his campaign on the KANU manifesto, having declared himself the KANU independent candidate. The opponent won the election, primarily because he was the more popular man, devoid of the radical conservative politics.

Tom Mboya, KANU's Secretary General, announced on 27 February 1966 that the KANU party delegates conference would be held on 12-13 March 1966, at which President Kenyatta would outline new plans for the party and introduce a new constitution.[73] This proposal was opposed by the trade unionist and parliamentary radicals, on the grounds that it was unconstitutional (the requisite number of days' notice not having been given). They claimed the objective was just a move by Mboya to evict Odinga from the party. However, a majority of the parliamentary group approved the convening of the conference. The delegates met in Limuru on 12-13 March 1966 and adopted the new constitution and subsequently elected new office bearers.[74]

The Limuru Conference of 1966 had more political than administrative consequences. First, the post of Vice President was abolished, and posts for eight Provincial Vice Presidents, one from each province, were created. Henceforth, full time party employees were to be appointed by the National Executive Committee. All those known or thought to be associated with Jaramogi Oginga Odinga were voted out in the snap party elections.

[70] *The East African Standard*, 28th February 1968.
[71] *Daily Nation*, 10th March 1976; 13th April 1976.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Pochevskii,Vnyeshnaya Politika Kenia, p.73
[74] Ibid.

However, the party politics and parliamentary groupings into conservatives and radicals did not deter the Russians in their endeavour to foster the two states' bilateral relations. The Russians embarked on the normalisation of parliamentary relations with Kenya in the 1967-69 period. Invitation of members of the backbench to visit the Soviet Union on a familiarisation tour was extended to the Kenya Government. In addition, they used diplomatic channels to carry out consultations with the government concerning global issues, such as international security, the then apartheid regime in South Africa, nuclear free zones and the Indian Ocean, the preparations of a convention on sea law, and the instability in the Horn of Africa.

Russia's efforts were further heightened by Dr Munyua Waiyaki, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, who made several declarations of intent to strengthen Kenya-Russia bilateral relations. He said: "Kenya values the help she receives from the Soviet Union ... and we want to strengthen the relationship between the two countries".[75] Minister's promises and wishes were actualised in the 1970s, when an agreement was signed to open a direct aerodrome corridor between Moscow and Nairobi.[76] Contacts between community-based organisations were re-activated. The Kenyan labour officials travelled to Russia to participate in the 100 years birthday anniversary of Lenin.[77] This was followed by a reciprocal visit to Nairobi by a delegation of the Central Committee to discuss the Russo-Kenya cultural agreement which was concluded and signed on the 18 July 1972.[78] The agreement stated as follows:

1. That USSR offers 20 scholarships to Kenyan students by meeting their expenses for round trip, tuition and boarding.
2. That Kenya agrees to send a variety of orchestra to perform in the USSR, provided that USSR pays for all the costs involved.
3. That an exhibition of Kenyan applied arts in Moscow for 20 days would be held at the expense of the host.
4. That the USSR agrees to meet fourteen days educational tour in USSR for two Kenyans. It was agreed that the two students be librarians or archivists and who had not been to Russia before.
5. That USSR offers three (3) Russian language teachers to the University of Nairobi for a term of 3 years at their own expense.

[75] KNS-BY/24/97, Minutes of the meeting held on 18th July, 1972 on the Kenya-Russian Cultural Agreement pp.1-3.
[76] Pochevskii ,Vnyeshnaya Politika Kenia p.73
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.

6. It was accepted unanimously that Kenya desperately needed doctors and that the USSR had offered seven (7) doctors to work in the provinces, therefore national interest demanded that the offer be accepted or a very good reason for objection be given. It was agreed that if there was a failure to get a clear answer from the Ministry of Health by 21 July 1972, the matter would be referred to cabinet for action.
7. Lastly, it was agreed that the two countries exchange radio and TV programmes. However, local legislation on this matter would be observed.

The work on the execution of the agreement was coordinated by Kenya's Ministry of Cooperatives and Social Services. The agreement wholly placed all the financial responsibilities to the Russian government as Kenya remained non-committal.

Kenya-Russia relations warmed up when in June 1971 a delegation of the Supreme Soviet Committee visited Nairobi and met the Speaker to the National Assembly and his deputy at the Kenya National Assembly Chambers.[79] The Kenyan parliament delegation made a reciprocal visit to Moscow in November 1972 in response to the 1967 invitation.[80]

Another positive step towards Russia-Kenya relations presented itself in July 1972, when the then Minister for Finance and Planning, Mwai Kibaki, on behalf of the Kenya Government requested the Soviet government to actualise the 1964 agreement on economic and technical cooperation. In April 1973, Russian warships docked at the port of Mombasa and were met by the Defence Minister, James Gichuru.[81] In February 1976, the Kenya Government re-visited the economic and the technical assistance agreement signed in 1964 with a call for an "exchange of opinions" with regard to that agreement. The high level visits and agreements served well the Kenya-Russia relations for the time being. The Cold War politics manifesting in the conservative and radical wings of KANU did not allow any further smooth Kenya-Russia relations to continue. The government changed its mind and asked the Russians to participate only in the construction of mental hospitals in Nairobi, Mombasa and Kisumu. The Kenya government further cancelled a trip to Moscow by the Kenyan parliamentary delegation planned for August 1977. The bilateral relations in the 1970s entered their lowest level at this juncture.

[79]Pochevskii ,Vnyeshnaya Politika Kenia p.73.
[80]Ibid.
[81]Ibid.

The relations further worsened with the Russian invasion and occupation of Afghanistan in 1979. Kenya, as a result, boycotted the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games (the national Olympic team assembled at Bhukungu Stadium, Kakamega, where Moi and his cabinet were chief guests).[82] President Moi, in a face-to-face talk with the Russian Ambassador at State House Nairobi on 22 May 1980, stated that,

> Kenya was interested in the development and growth of Russo–Kenya relations and the boycott of Moscow Olympic Games constituted her political tactics to defend human rights.[83]

However, it is logical to summarise that Kenya was only playing proxy politics. Prior to the Moscow Olympic Games, the USA dispatched former world champion boxer Mohammed Ali to Africa to lobby against attending the Games.[84] Kenya, was therefore, bowing to American pressure rather than protesting the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan.

Interestingly, 1983 witnessed the warming up of the Kenya-Russia relations. An aeronautic agreement was signed to allow the Russian airliner (Aeroflot) to fly direct Moscow-Cairo-Nairobi and Nairobi-Bujumbura, Kigali-Antananarivo routes.[85] The relationship continued to improve in March 1983 when the Russian chamber of commerce secured an agreement in Nairobi with their counterpart, the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KNCCI). This was followed again by the Kenya-Russia trade agreement signed in Nairobi in June 1983.[86] In December 1983, the Russians participated in the twentieth anniversary of Kenya's independence. The subcommittee of the Supreme Soviet, led by P.Y. Straumans, held a closed-door discussion with President Moi at State House, Nairobi, at the end of independence celebrations.[87]

The years 1983-88 witnessed increased participation of the Russian parliamentary committee on trade and industry at the Nairobi International Show. The Russians, under the cultural and technical cooperation agreement, increased the number of scholarships to students joining their higher institutions of learning during the period 1984-86. They also increased the number of doctors posted to work in Kenya's hospitals, especially the Nyanza General Hospital (popularly known as Russia Hospital).

[82] *The Standard* 23rd May 1980.
[83] Ibid., p.77
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid

The above activities are clear indicators that Kenya-Russia relations improved commendably. However, the improved relations can be interpreted here in two ways. First, that Kenya had seen the need to diversify her foreign policy approaches for her economic achievements. Second, the Cold War had come to an end in 1989. Communism was crumbling and was no longer a threat to the West. Kenya was under intense pressure to democratise and, therefore, Russia and the Middle East temporarily provided refuge in a rather hostile world.

Conclusion

The capitalist hold on Kenya did not diminish or disappear with the retreat of the British colonials at independence in 1963. Instead, the dynamics of the global capitalist economic order and geopolitik drew the country increasingly into its fold.

Policy directions to facilitate the convergence of the shield and the sickle became lukewarm, at best, and turbulent, at worst. The Kenyatta regime of the 1960s and the 1970s recognised the merits of non-alignment in the global politico-ideological context dubbed the "Cold War", which pitched the capitalist domain against the communist/socialist bloc. On the Kenyan political scene, it pitched the conservative Members of Parliament, led by Tom Mboya, against the progressive elements, led by Jaramogi Oginga Odinga. In the final analysis, the former advocated a policy, which would guarantee continuity of entrenched free enterprise economy under the British colonial state. The latter, was revolutionary and people driven championing a complete break with the past and transfer of authority and ownership of wealth and resources wholesale to the people — the workers, the farmers, herdsmen and squatters, among others. dispossessed by colonialism. Non-alignment would seem, though, to have been a facade, a brilliant ploy used by diehard conservatives in the KANU establishment to portray some semblance of political neutrality in global political affairs.

In reality, the lure of private property ownership deflected the dominant political class forcibly away from the communist/socialist orbit. Overtures by Russia and its satellites to nurture close bilateral relations between Kenya and Russia received lip service from the independent Kenyan state. It is only with the final and recent end of the Cold War that some diplomatic ties would seem to be taking root between Kenya and Russia.

Kenya's 50 Years of Diplomatic Engagement

From Kenyatta to Kenyatta



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Kenya's 50 Years of Diplomatic Engagement

From Kenyatta to Kenyatta

Kenya's Fifty Years of Diplomatic Engagement: From Kenyatta to Kenyatta is a collection of academic essays and recollections by Kenyan diplomats tracing Kenya's diplomacy from independence in 1963 to 2013.

The first part of this historical narrative is told by luminaries of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This includes the very early recruits who joined the Ministry in 1964 such as Denis Afande, Inderjeet Singh Bhoi and Leonard Kibinge. After them, the narrative is taken up by later-day diplomats like Bethwell Kiplagat and Francis Muthaura. To give an academic perspective to Kenya's diplomacy, academics like Macharia Munene and Peter Kagwanja weigh in alongside academics-turned-diplomats like Kipyego Cheluget, Paul Kurgat and Philip Mwanzia to contextualise the story of Kenya before, during and after the cold war period. The editor has also dug into selected biographies to profile other key figures who practised Kenyan diplomacy.

Interestingly, the story of the nation's struggle to find a place in the complex diplomatic world can, at times, read like a thriller novel. For example, the stories of Bethwell Kiplagat traversing the jungles of Mozambique as he sought peace for that country are full of suspense, surprise and excitement. Likewise, the descriptions of the methods Kenya used to win the bid to host the most important UN agency in Nairobi is amazing to say the least.

This is an important book; a record of the past that will be cherished by future generations and by friends of Kenya near and far.

About the Editor



Kipyego Cheluget is COMESA Assistant Secretary General and was Kenya's High Commissioner to Zambia and Malawi. He served in various capacities at the Ministry Head Quarters and missions abroad including IGAD and EAC.

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