



Discussion Paper

**NATION BUILDING IN AFRICA: POST-COLONIAL EXPERIENCES AND  
LESSONS FROM TANZANIA, KENYA, SOUTH AFRICA AND NAMIBIA**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The process of forming a collective national identity within a given territory broadly referred to as nation building has been imperative for many African governments particularly after gaining independence. This was necessary to unite post-colonial societies that had been fractured by years of colonialism. The persistent occurrence of violent conflicts fueled by ethnic and religious differences in the post-colonial era demonstrates that nation building has not been fully achieved in some countries and that it is still a necessary initiative. This paper examines the experiences of nation building in Africa with a particular focus on Tanzania, Kenya, South Africa and Namibia as a point of reference to assess the challenges and successes of nation building and to concurrently consider whether it is still a worthwhile project for the continent. Drawing on an extensive body of knowledge available in the literature, this paper outlines how nation building was more successful in Tanzania than in Kenya. It also shows how in South African and Namibia, nation building is increasingly threatened by economic inequality. The paper also touches on some potential pitfalls of nation building. It then concludes by arguing that for nation building to remain relevant, a sense of unity and solidarity should be constructed, based on shared experiences of exclusion and marginalization that cut across ethnic and religious differences. Whilst nation building policies that attempt to homogenize populations such as the prioritization of Swahili in Tanzania can be useful; for nation building to remain relevant today it must make room for diversity and base unity on the same economic, political and ecological challenges that Africans and other developing parts of the world face.

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

ANC	African National Congress
KADU	Kenya African Democratic Union
KANU	Kenya African National Union
LAPSSET	Lamu Port, South Sudan-Ethiopia Transport Corridor
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
SACP	South African Communist Party
SWAPO	South West Africa People's Organization
TANU	Tanganyika African National Union
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front)

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## CHAPTER ONE

### 1.1. Introduction

Africa is one of the most diverse continents in the world with thousands of ethnic groups, each possessing distinct languages, dialects and cultures. Religious diversity in on the continent is evidenced by the spread of Christianity, Islam and Traditional African religions. The process of colonisation in Africa, like in many parts of the world, capitalised on the existing diversity to entrench colonial rule through the creation of artificial arbitrary boundaries, the encouragement of separate/uneven development and the creation of hierarchies amongst different ethnic groups to sow divisions. Thus the ethnocentrism accentuated by colonialism has in many ways proved to be the Achilles Heel of many African countries that have been plagued by post-independence conflict, instability and civil war such as in Sudan, Somalia, Central African Republic, Mali and the Democratic Republic of Congo. To deal with instability in the immediate term, and to reduce the incidence of conflict, many newly independent African countries after decolonisation embarked on massive nation building programs defined here as the process of forming a collective national identity within a given territory (Von Bogdandy, Häußler, Hanschmann, and Utz 2005, Bandyopadhyay and Green 2013).

Drawing on an extensive body of knowledge available in the literature, this paper assesses the experiences of nation building in Africa in order to generate debate on the current and future prospects of nation building. In particular, the paper studies four African countries: Tanzania, Kenya, South Africa and Namibia. Each of these countries went through complex socio-economic and political processes and the paper endeavours to capture some of the countries' key policies and moments to enable productive discourse on nation building in Africa. The paper is structured into three parts. It begins by establishing some conceptual clarity on the notion of nation building. The second section gives an overview of how nation building has been understood in Africa before outlining its experiences in four case studies. The third part offers a cautionary assessment of nation building by highlighting some of its potential pitfalls before some concluding remarks on a possible nation building project we should aspire to as Africans are posited.

#### 1.1.2 Nation Building: A Conceptual Framework

Nation building is a normative concept that can have divergent meanings in different contexts. It is principally understood as the process of creating a collective identity or a national community through the political integration of members within a given territory (Von Bogdandy et al 2013). 'It is an indigenous process that often draws on existing traditions, institutions, and customs, redefining them as national characteristics in order to support the nation's claim to sovereignty and uniqueness' (Von Bogdandy et al 2005: 586). In essence, nation building strategies attempt to

create an overarching supra-national identity that should replace and/or subsume sub-national identities and cultures (Bauman 1998).

Nation building and state building have sometimes been used interchangeably. However, state building generally refers to the construction of state institutions for a functioning state, while nation building refers to the construction of a national identity which is also pivotal for a functioning state (Alesina and Reich 2013). For a clearer understanding of nation building, it is important to unpack what a 'nation' is and also to differentiate nation building with the concept of the 'nation-state' for which it is often conflated. Early conceptions of a 'nation' defined it as a group or race of people who shared history, traditions, and culture, sometimes religion, and usually language. Thus countries usually comprise several nations such as the United Kingdom which comprises four nations, England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales (Stephenson 2005). In this sense, many African countries comprise multiple nations. However, some scholars distinguish between an ethnic nation, based on the social construction of race or ethnicity and a civic/democratic nation based on common identity and loyalty to a set of political ideas and institutions. (Stephenson 2005). Schnapper (1997) notes that a civic nation integrates people into a community of citizens regardless of their ethnic identity. Schnapper (1997: 229) adds that, "through the notion of citizenship, a civic nation transcends all particularities such as biological, historical, economic, social, religious, or cultural differences. Every citizen has the same rights and the same duties, and is subjected to the same laws regardless of their race, gender, religion, socioeconomic status or ethnic identity". Some countries suppress the ethnic identities and elevate the notion of a civic nation meaning that nation building can also be about building a common identity centred on certain civic political features.

When a group of people or a nation becomes a defined political entity, it is regarded as a nation-state. A nation-state can exist after a clear understanding of the nation by a group of people or even in circumstances where there is no conception of a nation. Rejai and Enloe (1969: 140) for instance observe that "in many western countries, the sense of national identity by nations evolved prior to the crystallization of the structures of political authority of the nation-state whereas in newly independent countries, authority and sovereignty of the nation-state run ahead of a self-conscious national identity and cultural integration". Therefore in Africa and other parts of the world, nation-states were imposed from above and created through colonisation without consideration for the diverse identities and the need for cultural integration such that it was common to have borders separating a cohesive group of people. A more proactive process of creating a national identity through nation building within the boundaries of a nation-states created by colonisation was therefore necessary in these countries to create and strengthen the newly independent political entities.

### ***Global trends***

Nation building is not unique to Africa as it has been a prominent project in many countries across the world at different periods in history. European nations at some stage had to evolve from

disparate city-states into countries composed of multiple nations. For example, the Italian city-states of Florence, Venice, Milan and Genoa to mention a few, evolved into a single nation. Alesina and Reich (2013) observe that in 1860, French was still a foreign language to half the children in France. They add that, “outside major cities, France was a country of different languages, dialects and diverse currencies. Travel far outside one’s own village was rare, and indifference or hostility to the French state common. It was after the French Revolution and throughout the 19th century that French rulers sought to form an identity of French citizens” (Alesina and Reich 2013: 2). In Italy, France and many other European countries nation building took a long time, and was the result not only of political leadership, but of changes in technology and economic processes (the agricultural and then industrial revolutions), as well as communication, culture, civil society, and many other factors (Stephenson 2005). The United States comprised 13 colonies with diverse origins who then came together to form a new nation and state. However, it must be noted that this was under the backdrop of the destruction of other nations particularly the indigenous Indian nations. After its formation, Stephenson (2005) adds that the American state, like so many in contemporary times, faced the prospect of secession and disintegration in 1865, and it took another 100 years for the integration of Black and White, North and South, East and West to be achieved (Stephenson 2005).

Whilst these early developments illustrated nation building processes, “the concept of nation building itself gained prominence in the 1960s among historically oriented social scientists who studied processes of state construction in established European states” (Kolsto 2000: 22)<sup>1</sup>. In the developing world, the study of nation building also intensified in the 1960s as this was the decade of decolonization in Africa and Asia which led to the creation of many new independent states. To deal with colonial divisions and to construct effective new states, these new states consciously embarked on nation building programs. Two decades later, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia in the late 1980s and early 1990s, a wave of state creation followed heightening the need for nation building.<sup>2</sup> Due to the diversity of the African continent and the persistent occurrence of ethnic, religious and other forms of violent conflict, nation building understood in this paper as process of forming a collective national identity within a given political territory or nation-state is still an important idea in Africa. The following section gives an overview of nation building in Africa before a more detailed focus on the selected case studies.

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<sup>1</sup>In the oldest nation-states of Europe, the earliest stage of nation building processes commenced in the Middle Ages and lasted until the French Revolution. Some of the scholars who focused on nation building at the time include, Karl Deutsch, Charles Tilly, and Reinhard Bendix. (Kolsto 2000: 24) available at- <http://folk.uio.no/palk/ch02.htm>. Accessed 17 June 2016.

<sup>2</sup> From the ashes of the former Yugoslavia no less than seven new states emerged (Bunce 1999; Roeder 2007). <http://www.hf.uio.no/ilos/forskning/prosjekter/nation-w-balkan/dokumenter/symbolic-nation-building-in-w-balkan-states.pdf>. Accessed 7 June 2016.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2.1. An overview of Nation Building in Africa

Bandyopadhyay and Green (2013: 109) observe that “nation-building in Africa or ‘national integration’ as it was called in the 1960s and early 1970s was one of the most prominent topics among both academics and policymakers”. This was driven by the desire to unify the newly independent states and engender development to uplift the black African population that had been oppressed under colonialism. However, the attention to nation-building in Africa began to weaken with the onset of economic crises and the subsequent demise of the modernization theory in the 1970s, “as scholars shifted their attention away from internal political developments toward the international political economy inspired by dependency theory” (Bandyopadhyay and Green 2013: 109).

Various nation building policies were adopted by African countries and some appeared banal in their effects on national integration. Countries adopted strategies such as changing the name of the state, capital city, or currency as noted by Bandyopadhyay and Green (2013:109). Young (2004: 12) also noted how “numerous rituals such as national holidays, national anthems, and daily flag-raising ceremonies at all administrative headquarters drummed the national idea into the public consciousness”. In addition to these ordinary nation building policies, there were more overt and profound policies such as changing the education curriculum, the creation of one-party states, religious and linguistic homogenization and non-ethnic censuses that this paper will focus on in the analysis of nation building processes in Tanzania, Kenya, South Africa and Namibia. It is important to note that there is no blueprint or one size fits all for nation building, but rather different countries pursue different nation building strategies depending on the social, political and economic context. Nonetheless, table 1 below summarises some of the nation building in post-colonial Africa. The table is not conclusive but it is indicative of the broad range of nation building policies from the more banal ones that are commonplace to the more profound ones that have a deep-seated effect on nation building.

**Table 1: Nation building policies in post-colonial Africa**

<b>Banal nation building policies</b>	<b>Profound nation building policies</b>
Changing the name of the state, capital, streets	Religious and linguistic homogenization
National anthems, daily flag-raising ceremonies	Education policies on promoting nation-building
National holidays	One-party states
Changing national currencies	Non-ethnic censuses
National dress/attire	Land nationalisation



Most countries adopted the banal nation building policies but the following discussion of selected case studies demonstrates, there was a divergence in the adoption of nation building policies that had a profound effect.

### **2.1.1 Nation Building in Tanzania**

Tanzania is one of the most diverse countries on the African continent with over 120 ethnic groups and an almost equal balance of Muslims and Christians (Kessler 2006). Since its independence in 1961, apart from being involved in one external war and the 1978 invasion of Uganda to topple Idi Amini's tyrannical regime, an attempt that was largely welcomed by the Ugandans; Tanzania has never had an internal war (Brzoska and Pearson 1994: 209 in Kessler 2006). This, however, does not suggest that the country has been immune to conflict. Cases of internal conflict have revolved around issues of cattle-rustling, vigilante justice, political and religious differences (Kessler 2006). For instance in 1993, the now-banned Muslim activist group Balukta, incited riots in the primarily Muslim Mwembechi area of Dar es Salaam against butcheries that sold pork (Heilman and Kaiser 2002: 696 in Kessler 2006). Tensions and clashes in Zanzibar have also principally been religious. Politically, there have been incidences of occasional clashes between supporters of opposing political and state militia following the reestablishment of multipartyism in 1995 (Kessler 2006). Despite this, the prevailing peace in the country attests to the success of nation building amongst Tanzanians. So much so, Kessler (2006) observes that peace has been viewed as the primary source of national pride in the country. It is therefore important to focus on some of the nation building policies adopted in Tanzania that have ensured enduring peace and stability.

The long-term policy directions adopted in Tanzania were a result of the Arusha Declaration of 1967 which was the ruling party's Policy on Socialism and Self Reliance and essentially the country's statement of African Socialism (Kessler 2006). The economic policies of villagization, collectivization, and attempts to prevent economic exploitation contributed to unity and non-polarization because no group was favoured and all were supposed to struggle together for development. Politically, all competition had to be housed within a single national party which firmly established a passive political subject orientation among most citizens (Kessler 2006). In essence, post-colonial Tanzania embarked on "restructuring identity" meaning that, rather than adopting ideologies from the Eastern bloc that appeared to dovetail with perceived African ideas, the Tanzanian government set up its own "ideological laboratory" and produced their own brand of socialism (Asante 1988: 23). Some of the policies that sought to build a national identity are;

#### ***The national language policy***

Swahili was declared Tanzania's national language in 1967 promoting its use in government, schools and in the media (Miguel 2004). The National Swahili Council was established to promote its use in all spheres of public life. President Julius Nyerere even translated several of

Shakespeare's plays into Swahili (Bandyopadhyay and Green 2013). Swahili (or Kiswahili in East Africa) is an indigenous African language originating on the Indian Ocean coast of East Africa and is seen as largely ethnically neutral thus its use served to limit competition and promote unity (Miguel 2004, Wangwe 2005). The adoption of Swahili as a national language was not unique as there were similar efforts in Ethiopia, where Emperor Hailie Selassie declared Amharic as the national language in 1955, and in Somalia, where Siad Barre's government standardised the Somali script and made it the sole national language in 1972 (Green 2011). However, a single national language did not prevent political fragmentation and civil wars in Ethiopia and Somalia (Green 2011). Thus, it can be concluded that other complementary policies are required to build a unified nation.

The school curriculum can be used for communicating with the citizens of a country to spread the image and heritage of the 'nation' and to inculcate an attachment to it (Kessler 2006). The education system for instance was a vital tool used to promote a coherent national linguistic or ideological identity in Tanzania. The next section explores how the education system was used in Tanzania as part of the nation building project.

### ***The education system***

It was through the education system that Swahili came to be the national language of Tanzania. The public school curriculum was employed to stress common Tanzanian history, culture, and values and to inculcate students with a strong sense of national and Pan-African identity (Miguel 2004). By the late 1960s, Green (2011) notes that political education was included as a standard curriculum subject tested in exams for both primary and secondary education. For example in a 1973 Form 6 exam, one typical question was, "*Discipline is a prerequisite of nation building. Comment on this with respect to Tanzania at present?*" (Green 2011). Upon completion of secondary school, graduates were required to serve two years in the National Service which in itself was designed to promote national unity and has since been revived (2013) to curb moral decay and instil a sense of patriotism (Kessler 2006). Many other African countries promoted obligatory military conscription and/or national service for secondary school or university students as a means of integrating their citizens. In Angola, for instance, all citizens over the age of 20 are required to serve 2 years in the military, this has been statutory since 1993. In Nigeria, all university students have been required to join the National Youth Service Corps since 1973. The Corps was designed to promote national unity by posting students to a state other than their state of birth (Bandyopadhyay and Green 2013: 110).

### ***Non-ethnic censuses***

The Nyerere administration embarked on a project of collecting census data along non-ethnic or religious categories after 1967 (Tripp 1999: 43). On the other hand, the University of Dar es Salaam prohibited research about ethnicity. By radically de-emphasizing sub-national (ethnic) group orientations in public life, the government did not diminish the power these groups held, but it did successfully relegate them to private life (Kessler 2006). According to Chazan, (1982: 464),

these moves were seen "as a step to eliminate divisive and tribal forces which militate against national unity and progress". To deal with religious pluralism and in order to encourage the formation of a national identity, the Tanzanian government historically sought to mitigate the importance of religion for a person's identity (Halloran 2013). Thus, the Tanzanian government has not taken a census that includes religion since 1967, though the government claims there are equal amounts of Muslims and Christians in Tanzania (Halloran 2013). Lieberman & Singh (2009) highlighted the detrimental effects of institutionalising ethnicity through censuses arguing that this creates the necessary breeding space for the outbreak of political violence.

### ***Political leadership and ideology***

All of the previously mentioned nation building policies in Tanzania were underpinned by strong political leadership with a clear ideological position. The philosophies of Julius Nyerere which were inspired by a Pan-Africanist and socialist political philosophy downplayed the role of ethnic affiliation in public life and instead emphasized a single Tanzanian national identity (Miguel 2004). A founding principle of Nyerere's ruling party, the Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) was '*to fight tribalism and any other factors which would hinder the development of unity among Africans*' (Miguel 2004, Abdulaziz 1980). The self-reliance and socialist system of Ujamaa was a central feature of the nation building project. Ujamaa was Nyerere's version of African Socialism rooted in traditional African values and had as its core the emphasis on family hood and communalism of traditional African societies while being upheld by the pillars of freedom, equality and unity (Ibhawoh and Dibua 2003: 62). It brought people together in specific villages to ensure a relatively easy supply of social services, political mobilisation as well as creating self-sufficient villages. It should be noted that this policy despite improving the lives of some of the Tanzanians was received with scepticism by some members of the communities, particularly progressive private farmers and villagers who had to leave their traditional lands where their families had lived for centuries (Kessler 2006).

Driven by the need to recognise the importance of representing all groups with the intention of gaining widespread legitimacy for the nationhood, the government instituted policies that incorporated diverse groups at its uppermost levels. The Tanzania African National Union (TANU) declared to alternate its presidential and vice-presidential candidates, with one from Zanzibar and one from the mainland in each election, a policy that also had the effect of encouraging religious balance (Kessler 2006). Furthermore civil servants were posted beyond their home regions and moved frequently to avoid the appearance of patronage (Tripp 1999: 44). As a result of these laws and policies, it was difficult to perceive the government as anything other than national, although a preponderance of Christians in leadership roles was a persistent problem (Kessler 2006).

Another important component of the political reform package carried out in Tanzania was the complete overhaul of local government institutions, with the aim of strengthening village councils and district councils. Traditional rural authorities and customary tribal law inherited from the

colonial period were completely dismantled in Tanzania upon independence, and this may have played a role in further diminishing the place of ethnicity in Tanzania (Miguel 2004). In 1963, the African Chiefs Ordinance (Repeal) Act was introduced to abolish the institution of the chieftaincy (Hayward 2013). The chiefs were also denied an opportunity for seeking judicial redress for loss of office under the Abolition of Office: Consequential Provisions Act 1963. To replace the structure of tribal authority, the Nyerere administration instituted an elaborate system of overlapping local committees, all of which were connected to TANU as the governing party (Hayward 2013).

As noted earlier, the nation building policies adopted in Tanzania are not unique to the country. However these policies were less successful in some countries, they did not prevent political fragmentation, conflict and even civil wars. Kenya is one case in point where nation building was not as effective, although the government is trying to foment unity.

### **2.1.2. Nation building in Kenya**

Kenya is a natural case to juxtapose with Tanzania because as Miguel (2004) noted, they have similar geography and histories, but they have followed radically different nation building policies since independence. In addition, Barkan (1994) noted that both countries experienced British colonial rule and inherited a common set of political, administrative, and economic institutions. As adjacent countries, they share a common climate and have similar natural resource endowments. However, as Miguel (2004:331) points out, “this is not to say that both countries are identical but to note that many social scientists have taken the fundamental similarity of Kenya and Tanzania as an analytical starting point”, and this paper follows in this tradition.

Kenya has over 70 ethnic groups but the five largest - Kikuyu, Luo, Luhya, Kamba and Kalenjin account for 70% of the population.<sup>3</sup> Forster, Hitchcock and Lyimo (2000) observe that ethnic undercurrents have always been a significant force in politics both before and after independence. They add that divisions were such that in 1960 there was a split between the Kenya African National Union (KANU) and the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU), which were along tribal lines (Forster, Hitchcock and Lyimo 2000). KANU was dominated by Kikuyu and Luo and had wider support. KADU was supported by those who felt excluded such as the Kalenjin, Maasai, Turkana and Samburu groups and this is where Daniel ArapMoi who took over from Jomo Kenyatta (Sr) established himself. KADU amalgamated with KANU in 1964, but even within the framework of the one-party state that was established, ethnic undercurrents remained evident (Forster, Hitchcock and Lyimo 2000). Demands for recognition of local needs could easily raise ethnic issues; and in particular, “there was criticism of Kikuyu reluctance to allow the less developed parts of the country to catch up” (Forster, Hitchcock and Lyimo 2000:109). Another

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<sup>3</sup>97.58% of Kenya's citizens are affiliated with its 32 major indigenous groups of which the largest ethnic group, the Kikuyu, makes up 20%.<http://www.africa.upenn.edu/NEH/kethnic.htm>

contentious issue was that of redistribution of land of which there were allegations that a disproportionate share went to the Kikuyu (Forster, Hitchcock and Lyimo 2000).

The divergence between Kenya and Tanzania can broadly be attributed to political socialization which entails how the mass media and the educational system can be employed by political leaders to inculcate citizens with "desirable" political ideals, including a strong attachment to the nation over ethnic and regional identities (Miguel 2004: 331). However if there is no political will from a country's leadership to socialise citizens to suppress ethnic identities, then nation building is futile. This was possibly one of the major differences between Kenya and Tanzania.

### ***Political leadership and ideology***

The first president of independent Kenya, President Jomo Kenyatta (Sr) and his party were also proponents of African socialism. Under their version of socialism, all citizens were encouraged to contribute to the rapid development of the economy and society (Cowen and Shenton 1998). Every member of African traditional society had a duty to work to ensure success in the endeavours of the Government (Government of Kenya Sessional Paper No. 10 1965:4, Cowen and Shenton 1998). The Harambee system of fundraising introduced in 1965 by Jomo Kenyatta was a central feature that promoted a sense of national unity and hard work (Deng 2008). Harambee, meaning "let's all pull together," is an indigenous tradition of self-help that involves collective and cooperative participation of a community in an attempt to fill perceived needs through utilization of its own resources (Ngau 1987: 524). Despite propounding a Kenyan version of African socialism, "the first two presidents, Jomo Kenyatta and Daniel ArapMoi, were perceived as "tribalists" and political opportunists who thrived on the politics of ethnic division" (Miguel 2004:337). During their reign, ethnicity became the primary cleavage of political life in Kenya. the Moi regime in particular was widely implicated in arming and financing violent ethnic militias before national elections in 1992 and 1997 that left hundreds dead (Miguel 2004). This was unlike the Tanzanian leader Nyerere who forcefully downplayed the role of ethnic affiliation in public life.

### ***The Kenyan education system***

Although the Kenyan Ministry of Education made several nation building pronouncements in the 1960s, Miguel (2004: 336) notes that "these were merely vague invocations, as there was little evidence within schools that the rhetoric was followed by any serious attempts to make real changes". For nearly twenty years after independence, the central government in Kenya did not use the school curriculum to promote a coherent national linguistic or ideological identity. The official geography, history, and civics (GHC) curriculums did not study Kenya as a nation until grade 5 and the focus on provincial geography and history in grades 1-4 probably served to exacerbate regional and ethnic divisions, especially among the many Kenyans who dropped out of primary school before grade 5 (Miguel 2004). Nyaberi (2011) recommended that the education policy in Kenya should accentuate the interrelationships and diversity of cultural heritage in a

globalized world by formulating and implementing a critical and culturally inclusive national curriculum that would strengthen Kenya's national identity as a multicultural nation.

The potential for education to encourage national integration and unity in Kenya was also undermined by the colonial and the post-independence language policies. Education policies during the colonial period insisted on the use of local vernaculars as the languages of instruction. Thereby, the Kenyan population was effectively denied a common language to communicate and organize nationally (Weber 2009:17). In the post-independence period, the Kenyan government placed more emphasis on the use of local vernacular languages and English instead of Swahili. Local vernacular languages were particularly used for instruction in primary schools and Swahili and English in secondary schools. Although Swahili was taught in primary schools as a subject it was not considered important enough to be included as an examinable subject for the primary school leaving exam until the late 1980s (Weber 2009: 17). The lack of a unifying language in education was accentuated by overall competition between vernacular languages and the national language. (Weber 2009)

### ***The national language policy***

Currently, the national languages of Kenya are Swahili and English. However, compared to its neighbouring country Tanzania, Swahili is used to a lesser degree. In Kenya, Swahili is competing with English and a multitude of regional vernacular languages, such as Gikuyu, Kalenjin, Dholuo, and Kikamba (Weber 2009). The preponderance of ethnic languages was exacerbated by Kenyatta who sometimes addressed the population in his mother tongue Gikuyu even when addressing people who did not belong to the Kikuyu ethnic group (Weber 2009). In addition, the liberalization of the media in 2002 and the spread of vernacular radio stations, such as Inoro FM and Kameme FM (Kikuyu), and Kass FM (Kalenjin), elevated the use of vernaculars and intensified ethnic consciousness and animosity (Wamwere 2008: 41 in Weber 2009:18). It is reported that in the post-election period, these radio stations provided a platform for hate-speech and thereby crucially contributed to the ethnic violence experienced in 2008 (Weber 2009).

### ***Economic inclusion***

Kochore (2014) puts it on record that since the disputed elections of 2007, and the subsequent tumultuous post-election period, the government of Kenya has embarked on a national healing and integration process. To achieve this goal, a national cohesion and integration commission was set up for essential reasons which are to promote national unity and the development of economic infrastructure in Kenya. It was also set up to oversee one of the main integration projects called the Lamu Port, South Sudan-Ethiopia Transport Corridor (LAPSSET) Project of 2012. This project focused on the development of the once marginalized region of Northern Kenya. Kochore (2014) notes that the northern region of Kenya has historically been marginalized and left on the periphery of the Kenyan national development projects. The ongoing LAPSSET project seeks to build infrastructure across the highly underdeveloped Northern Kenyan Region including an oil pipeline, railway, roads and a port at the coastal old town of Lamu to create a network that will connect

South Sudan, Ethiopia and Kenya, facilitating trade and most importantly, to provide oil-producing and landlocked South Sudan with a Passage to the Indian Ocean (Kochore 2014).

The use of infrastructural programs represents an evolution in nation building programs by directly integrating and mixing individuals from different parts of the country through extended road and rail links. Alesina and Reich (2013: 7) point out that the simplest way of thinking about homogenization is building roads, railroads or airports in order to reduce the costs of distance from the capital. This homogenises or creates unity by reducing economic isolation through facilitating access to resources or government services offered in the capital. The further an individual is from the government the more the more their socio-economic and political condition will differ, thus undermining a nation building project (Alesina and Reich 2013).

Inequality underlies the differing nation building outcomes in Tanzania and Kenya. It appears that ethnic groups in Tanzania shared more or less similar socio-economic and political backgrounds in contrast to Kenya where ethnic inequalities were more pronounced. Recent attempts by the Kenyan government to develop previously underdeveloped areas would therefore likely contribute positively towards nation building. The issue of inequality undermining attempts at nation building will be discussed further in the following case studies of South Africa and Namibia.

### **2.1.3. Nation building in South Africa**

Since the creation of the South African state in 1910, there have been numerous efforts towards 'whites only' nation building (Giliomee 1990). The construction of a white South African identity was based on the control of the state apparatus and privileged access to resources by the white minority that consisted of two main ethnic groups of European origin (English and Afrikaner) (Steyn 1997: 9). The narrative of 'whiteness' which informed the construction of white identity meant that race became an outstanding social category in South Africa. In the apartheid era, commencing in 1948, successive Nationalist governments promoted an exclusive Afrikaner ethnic nationalism, as well as a broader white nationalism (Baines 1998, Utrata 2003). National Party ideology propagated a particular vision of South Africa as a multiracial society (KwaaPrah, 1997). They justified separate development policies in terms of racial and ethnic differences. The apartheid regime therefore facilitated and encouraged black Africans to have separate so called 'Bantustans or homelands' which were ethnically based states (Baines 1998, Utrata 2003). The ascendancy of race over anything else was clearly a narrowly-defined form of nation building as Bantustans were established for the permanent removal of the black population in white South Africa (SAHO 2011). In total, ten homelands were created in South Africa. These were the Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Ciskei, Venda, Gazankulu, KaNgwane, KwaNdebele, KwaZulu, Lebowa, and QwaQwa. The homelands were designed for specific ethnic groups. For example, two homelands of Ciskei and Transkei were created only for the Xhosa people, while Bophuthatswana was created only for the Tswana people, KwaZulu was only for Zulu people, and

QwaQwa was for Basothos (SAHO 2011)<sup>4</sup>. After the unbanning of the liberation movements such as the African National Congress, Pan Africanist Congress, South African Communist Party in 1990, negotiations for a democratic transition commenced. However, that period witnessed some of the worst black on black violence sometimes characterised as a civil war that had significant ethnic connotations; with the predominantly Zulu, Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), antagonising the ANC. After the democratic transition in 1994, South Africa was effectively an amalgamation of several separate states that were the product of colonialism and apartheid. The ANC government under the leadership of Nelson Mandela encouraged reconciliation and unity captured in the notion of the ‘rainbow nation’ as described below.

### ***The idea of a ‘rainbow nation’***

Baines (1998) correctly observes that the image of South Africa as the ‘rainbow nation’ caught the public imagination because it symbolised the ‘new’ South Africa, the nation constructed in the post-apartheid era. The idea of a rainbow nation was a symbolic representation attributed to Archbishop Desmond Tutu who was associated with the process of reconciliation and nation building through his appearances in a series of television broadcasts in which he spoke of the ‘Rainbow People of God’ (Baines 1998). The metaphor of a rainbow with its colours suggests that South Africa is a multicultural society. The colours are not taken literally to represent particular cultural groups. Indeed, the rainbow nation rhetoric avoids direct reference to colour in the sense of race. Instead, the rainbow’s colours are simply said to symbolise the diversity of South Africa’s cultural/ethnic/racial groups. Either way, for Baines (1998) the ‘rainbow nation’ metaphor both informs and reinforces the vision of nation building.

The African National Congress (ANC) government and former president Nelson Mandela encouraged the ritual celebration of the ‘rainbow nation’ at international sports events such as the 1995 Rugby World Cup (Steenveld and Strelitz 1998: 610 in Baines 1998). Arts and cultural events such as the 1997 South African Music Awards were occasions for celebrating the emergence of the ‘rainbow nation’ (Baines 1998: 2). South Africa is a complex, divided and heterogeneous society characterized by deep-seated racial, ethnic, cultural, language and religious differences overlapping with large-scale socio-economic disparities. The government therefore has had to rely on further nation building projects to complement the idea of a rainbow nation (Bornman 2005: 5).

### ***Education policy***

Racial inequality was the value that was underpinned by apartheid education. Black Africans therefore received a lower standard of education in accordance with their status as “second class citizens” (Msila 2007: 151). Drawing on the 1996 constitution, the new education system sought to introduce egalitarian pedagogy in South African schools with the goal of creating a new South African identity that encompassed critical consciousness, to transform South African society, to

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<sup>4</sup>Lebowa for the Pedi and Northern Ndebele, Venda only for Vendas, Gazankulu was for Shangaan and Tsonga people: <http://www.sahistory.org.za/article/homelands#sthash.6CryN5wN.dpuf>



promote democracy and to magnify learner involvement in education. This meant that the curriculum had to change (Msila 2007). The Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) introduced eight learning areas whose objective was to forge the new identity and affirm a new citizenship (Msila 2007).<sup>5</sup> Social sciences as one of the learning areas aims to develop an awareness of how one can influence the future by confronting and challenging economic and social inequality (including racism and sexism) to build a non-racial democratic present and future (Department of Education 2002: 4 in Msila 2007). To further democratise education, the South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996 strengthens the ideals of the RNCS by highlighting the importance of school governance. One of the basic aims of SASA is to reverse the remnants of unfair discrimination as well as to redress past imbalances based on ethnicity and race. The act empowers school governing bodies (SGBs) to determine the schools policies under the Ministry of Education (Msila 2007). Their powers ensure that there is cooperation among various stakeholders particularly parents, learners and teachers and to make sure there is no place for racism, sexism or intolerance. The elevated status of the SGBs ensures the contribution of communities in the moulding of learners (Msila 2007). School discipline, language policy and religious policy are some of the policies in which the voices of the SGBs are crucial (Msila 2007: 151). South Africa also illustrates the unique potential for sports in nation building.

### ***The role of sports in nation building***

The 1995 Rugby World Cup was held in South Africa just one year after the country's first democratic elections. Playing under the banner of 'One Team, One Nation' and endorsed by President Mandela the sport became central to the project of nation building (Steenveld and Strelitz 1998). Considering its central role in Afrikaner popular culture, to rearticulate the meaning of 'South African rugby' away from narrow, race-specific interests towards those of the newly elected non-racial ANC-led government's nation-building project was an important feat (Steenveld and Strelitz 1998). According to Petersen, Cramon and Dahlgard (2013: 25) Nelson Mandela viewed sport as something that would evoke a feeling of belonging creating social cohesion around the act of performing a sport. They argue that it creates a profound emotional bonding and it is this very fraternity that makes South Africans have comradeship with one another even without meeting physically. Rugby was seen as a rich man's sport, reserved for white people, and Mandela encouraged support for the team which reflected his future of South Africa. Specifically, he looked "towards the day when all our teams would be truly representative of all people" (Petersen et al 2013). Mandela was trying to create a new nation through mixing old traditions with the new politics of representation (Petersen et al 2013).

Despite all the efforts towards nation building, contemporary South Africa is still divided economically and socially. Regardless of the lack of reliable data, there is widespread agreement

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<sup>5</sup> The eight Learning Areas are; Languages, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Arts and Culture, Life Orientation, Economic and Management Sciences, Technology (Department of Education 2002: 4 in Msila 2007)

that South Africa's economy is still white dominated. For instance, 70% of the senior managers in the private sector are white (BusinessTech 2016). On the other hand, recent racial slurs such as that by Penny Sparrow who referred to black people as 'monkeys' and comments by high court judge Mabel Jansen who suggested that rape is part of black culture illustrate the preponderance of racial identities. Both the social manifestation of racial differences and the reality of racially skewed economic inequality will likely undermine nation building. Thus notions of nation building that focus on existential issues such as culture and belonging are limited without a corresponding program that addresses socio-economic inequalities. The case of Namibia discussed below also illustrates this conundrum.

#### **2.1.4. Nation Building in Namibia**

From 1884, Namibia was a German colony until the South African regime invaded the area in 1915. When apartheid was introduced in South Africa in 1948, it was also automatically applied in Namibia thus the two countries share a similar past (The Catholic Institute for International Relations, 1983). The country was divided into ten Bantustans and each ethnic group was distributed within these. Non-white Africans were forced to relocate into Bantustans for the same reasons as in South Africa, that is, to separate people, in order to prevent them from coming together to organise against the regime and also to create a reserve of cheap, movable and powerless labour in the Bantustans (Berg 2004). During apartheid, ethnic categories were politically manipulated and racial discrimination formed the basis for government policies. Each so called "racial category" was attributed stereotypes for the purpose of creating and maintaining boundaries between the different ethnic groups (Schwerdt 2009, Berg 2004). The heritage of the South African strategy of "divide and rule" was perpetuated in Namibia to unprecedented levels. As observed by Berg (2004), all the tribes talked negatively about other tribes and assumed that their tribe was the most superior group. For instance, the San were understood by the colonialists to be nomads who could not own land. San-workers were paid low wages and given poor housing since it was argued that the San did not understand the meaning of materials of "civilisation" such as money or housing (Saugestad 2001). The apartheid regime also used the strategy of divide and rule in urban centres, dividing cities into townships designated by ethnic tribe. This strategy was used in order to discourage the joining of forces between the ethnic groups in an attempt to maintain the power the ruling South Africans had (Hamma and Sixtensson 2005). Post independent Namibia consequently contended with transforming an ethnically fragmented society while redressing economic imbalances (Fosse 1997).

#### ***The symbolic construction of a national identity***

Like in many other independent states, Fosse (1997:432) notes that the idea of Namibia as a unitary nation was not a political reality at independence but it had to be actively imagined, negotiated and practiced by the limited number of privileged and educated people who make active use of national mass media and democratic political processes and these people make up the political elite of the country. The poor majority related to each other in everyday struggles for survival through familiar

organisational principles such as kinship and ethnicity (Fosse 1997:432). Therefore many official agendas including nation building have to be related to the masses through education, the media and through national symbols to unite people at a level above that of loyalties of ethnic categories (Fosse 1997:433). Pottas (1991:10) explains that national symbols “provide a common focus for the many different peoples within a country and help foster a spirit of national identity and contribute to reconciliation” (Pottas 1991 in Fosse 1997:434). The annual celebration of Heroes Day is one such symbol that draws on the common experience of the atrocities and exploitation of colonialism as well as the sacrifices laid down for the liberation struggle to evoke a community of purpose. Other key symbols include the national flag, the national anthem and the national currency.

However, Fosse (1997:436) observes that “the sentiment aroused by national symbols has so far not been sufficient to divert attention from the dire need for economic redistribution and institutional development”. The South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) government has been at pains not to provoke the white minority who remain in control of the economy. This has resulted in many Namibians who are disillusioned with continued white racism and the lack of substantial changes in the conditions of life to conclude that the policy of national reconciliation is a one-sided affair. Under the guise of reconciliation, any controversial debates that radically change the status quo such as the compulsory redistribution of land without compensation are silenced (Fosse 1997). In the end, reconciliation itself and by extension nation building will be perceived as a policy to maintain the status quo weakening its legitimacy amongst the populace.

South Africans face similar challenges twenty two years into democracy without substantive wealth redistribution as is the case with Namibia. This has potential to fuel massive instability and to threaten any nation building projects. This raises an important question for consideration on whether any national identity can be viable without addressing the material conditions of the poor majority. To answer this question, we have a point of reference in African history. The economic collapse experienced in Africa in the late 1970s and early 1980s was triggered by a host of factors among them the growing problems of dependency, sharp price fluctuations, mostly of a downward nature on the raw materials markets and the oil shocks of the 1970s laid the basis for the debt crisis of the 1980s. The economic problems meant that the post-colonial social contract that created relative political stability became increasingly unsustainable (Olukoshi and Laakso 1996). The legitimacy of the state and the nation building which it pursued was called into question as various groups began to devise ways to cope with the deterioration (Olukoshi and Laakso 1996: 16).

The economic deterioration was characterised by a decline of the formal economy and the rise of the informal one whilst various human development indicators such as school enrolment, health care and nutrition declined. As the economic crisis and structural adjustment undermined the capacity of African states to meet the social and economic needs of their citizens, Olukoshi and Laakso (1996) observe that people had to increasingly fend for themselves. Some resuscitated/reinvigorated ethnic or religious associations narrowing solidarity especially of the

cross-ethnic type. Ethnic and religious fundamentalism and separatism arose with the economic crisis threatening national unity and the nation state such as “the dramatic collapse of the nation-state in Somalia and Liberia, state paralysis in Zaire Cameroon and Togo and the genocidal violence in Rwanda and Burundi. in addition, the organised killings carried out by government forces and Muslim fundamentalists in Algeria and Egypt, the political tension in Ethiopia and mostly ethnically based confrontations in Ghana (Nanumbas vs. Konkonbas), Zimbabwe (Shona vs. Ndebele) have all combined to create a sense of disorder on the continent” (Olukoshi and Laakso 1996: 8). The crisis of the nation state in Africa is therefore as much a crisis of politics and institutions as it is a crisis of the economy and of society itself (Olukoshi and Laakso 1996: 20). Violent conflict in several African countries in the 1980s demonstrated how economic performance can undermine national unity. The continued failure by the South African and Namibian governments to address fundamental economic inequalities will also possibly threaten their nation unity. Thus for nation building to remain a viable project, it should also incorporate policies that promote economic inclusiveness.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3.1. Cautionary notes on nation-building: its challenges

Nation building has always been a contested idea especially in many heterogeneous countries where the promotion of unity can become highly controversial. According to Mattes (1999 in Bornman 2005: 4), “a lack of consensus about national identity can bring about a crisis of national legitimacy, that is a sense among certain sections of society that the defined national community is inappropriate, that they are forced to be a member of it and that it is an inappropriate object of their loyalty”. Plural societies may also constrain popular consensus on the larger constitutional system and the nature of national symbols due to conflicting historical experiences and value systems (Bornman 2005). Those who perceive that their group is in power, “will also identify more easily with the country, the state and its symbols, while groups on the periphery of power often feel marginalized. Plural societies thus often encounter difficulties in effecting a widely held sense of citizenship, which is loyalty to the state and the willingness to comply with the rules of citizenship” (Bornman 2005: 4). The other pitfalls of nation building to be aware of are as follows:

- I. Nation building by one nation may destroy others. For instance, in the building of the American and Australian nations, indigenous Indian and Aboriginal nations were erased or marginalized. Stephenson (2005) notes that. The Six-Nations Confederacy of the Iriquois had existed before the US nation. Today many "First Nations" are in the process of nation re-building, re-building the social, cultural, economic and political foundations for what is left of self-governance. First nations seek to re-build cultural identities as nations in order to challenge their disintegration by others in the creation of their own states (Stephenson 2005).
- II. In many African countries, liberation movements had different imaginings of what the post-colonial state would look like based on their various ideological dispositions. For example, the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe was not fought by one group in pursuit of one future. The lens of nationalism often serves to conceal significant differentiations along the lines of gender, ethnicity, age, wealth and ideology. Terrence Ranger (1993, 2004) noted that ‘multiple imaginings’ were evident in Zimbabwe thus nationalisms instead of a single nationalism are integral to understanding the country’s politics (past and present). He concluded that given the diverse interests within the liberation movement, two options were open for its leaders following their successful struggle: “emancipating pluralist nationalism on the one hand and collective, majoritarian nationalism on the other” (Ranger 2004, Groves 2008). Raftopoulous (1999) writes that it was an authoritarian nationalism that emerged; it utilised state violence to repress opposition in the name of building the nation. The Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) conflated itself

with the Zimbabwean state and, in its efforts to consolidate power and build a congruent nation, it has denied the potential for diversity, enforcing uniformity and homogeneity instead (Groves 2008). Perhaps the most notable case of this dynamic was the crisis in Matebeleland in the mid-1980s, when ZANU-PF used state forces in an attempt to eliminate its major political rival ZAPU whose core was dominated by the Ndebele ethnic group (Groves 2008).

- III. In many instances nation-building policies have been used as a smokescreen to advance the interests of the President and his party. Bandyopadhyay and Green (2013:116) noted how Kwame Nkrumah's attempt at conscripting Ghanaian youth into his Young Pioneer Movement quickly degenerated into an indoctrination of 'Nkrumahism' with ritualistic pledges of loyalty to Nkrumah. They also claim that, the best example of failed nation-building in modern Africa was in Ethiopia, where Hailie Selassie promoted Amharic and Orthodox Christianity in a manner highly reminiscent of previous attempts at European nation-building. Just as 20th century nation-building attempts in interwar Poland and elsewhere not only failed to assimilate ethnic minorities but antagonized them instead, so too did Selassie's policies of centralization and linguistic and religious homogenization draw large amounts of ire from ethnic minorities in Ethiopia, especially in Eritrea (Bandyopadhyay and Green 2013). As a result "Meles Zenawi's regime not only allowed Eritrea to secede from Ethiopia but also created an ethno-federal system in the 1990s with provisions for freedom of religion and the right of each federal state to declare its own official language" (Bandyopadhyay and Green 2013:116).
- IV. The articulation and imposition of a single national identity through coordinated public policies may have serious negative implications for communities that do not fit neatly into the dominant national vision (Colley, 1992; Weber 1976). Resultantly, in some societies, there remains a fear that the construction of a national identity will accelerate the erosion of indigenous cultures and perhaps lead to a backlash by those who perceive these policies as a threat to their way of life (Miguel 2004). Nation-building policies could also be employed by opportunistic ethnic majority leaders to repress the legitimate political aspirations of minorities under the guise of benign reform. Where ethnic divisions are pronounced, chances are high that conflicts may arise (Miguel 2004). However, the Tanzanian case has proved that nation building can succeed in an African context without jeopardizing indigenous cultures and languages. For instance, the Tanzanian national identity currently coexists with ethnic identities rather than replacing them.
- V. Another reasonable concern regarding nation building is that, although it binds people together within a society, reducing the likelihood of domestic civil strife, it may provoke

nationalistic sentiments that lead to war with neighbouring countries (Miguel 2004, Bingham 2012).

## **CONCLUSION: TOWARDS A NATION BUILDING PROJECT WE SHOULD ASPIRE TO**

The cases discussed in this paper show the mixed possibilities of nation building in Africa. In Tanzania, the resultant stability over a long period is now reaping benefits for the country as it has become a prime destination of foreign direct investment and is registering positive economic growth. In South Africa and to a lesser extent in Namibia, the sustainability of nation building is being called into question by persistent inequality that is threatening unity. The two cases also show how nation building can mask inequalities creating a fragile unity. The paper also highlighted several pitfalls of nation building particularly related to minority groups which can lead to conflict.

Considering the successes and weaknesses of nation building discussed in this paper, the question that arises is whether there is a middle ground that can be found to continue with the project of nation building whilst avoiding some of its potential pitfalls? This paper concludes by showing how this is possible. For nation building to remain relevant, it should generate African unity whilst at the same time allowing its diverse communities to flourish. Postcolonial literature is therefore useful in constructing such a nation building project. Post colonialism represents the rise of different voices that were obscured under colonialism. These voices are from different groups of people who come from different racial groups and from different countries of the formerly colonised world. Post colonialism strives to unify these people based on their shared experience of oppression that continues after gaining independence. Nation building in Africa can also base unity on a shared experience of socio-economic and political oppression both in history and in the contemporary era. However as Appiah (1993) cautions, African unity should not be based on a false sense of commonality because pre-colonial Africa had a great deal of diversity of culture, language and religion. He also argues that attempts to unify Africa today based on a common racial identity are very problematic because of the racial diversity Africans. As a solution, Appiah postulates that any attempt to build Pan Africanism has to be based on common challenges or the current conditions. African countries share the same economic, political and ecological challenges and this can serve as the basis of solidarity in order to fight against exclusion and marginalisation. Therefore African identity is not about recovering from history old identities that were lost but rather an African identity is emerging on the basis of shared political and social challenges (1993:176). This approach to nation building allows the continent's diversity to flourish but at the same time gives the African people a tool which can be used to build unity amongst Africans and broadly with other populations across the world that share the same experiences.

Lastly, for nation building to remain relevant, appeals to homogenise or create uniformity in a nation-state should be avoided. Thus nation building can still be useful if it appeals to principles that treat everyone equally irrespective of their ethnic identity. As noted earlier, this describes a



civic nation which is premised on a common identity and loyalty to a set of political ideas and institutions (Stephenson 2005). Schnapper (1997: 229) adds that, “through the notion of citizenship, a civic nation transcends all particularities such as biological, historical, economic, social, religious, or cultural differences. Every citizen has the same rights and the same duties, and is subjected to the same laws regardless of their race, gender, religion, socioeconomic status or ethnic identity”. Thus nation building should strive to emphasise a civil national identity, instead of uniformity by promoting loyalty towards the Constitution, the rule of law and institutions of the state.

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