

**Remembering the 1998  
Nairobi Terror Attack:  
Cultural and Trauma Memory and the  
Reconciliation of a Nation**

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## **Dedication**

In loving memory of my mother

To my wife and children

## **Abstract**

At around 10:30 am on 7<sup>th</sup> August, 1998, a truck was stopped as it approached the rear entrance of the U.S. embassy building in Nairobi, instigating a brief argument and confrontation between the 'Arab-looking' men in the truck and the embassy guards. This led to a shoot-out between them before a powerful explosion completely tore down half of the embassy while the entire Ufundi Cooperative Building next to it collapsed to the ground. The site of the embassy and its adjacent streets were in a total state of chaos. In the aftermath of the attack 218 people were declared dead, over 5000 injured and property worth billions of Kenyan shillings destroyed. The bombing remains one of the worst terror attacks to have happened on Kenyan soil. Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda terror group, through a proxy, (the Liberation Army for the Islamic Sanctuary), claimed responsibility. In their reportage of the rescue effort, the Kenyan media took what has been perceived as an ethnically inclined coverage by focussing on two Kikuyu victims, Rose Wanjiku and Sammy Nganga, as the most victimized; portrayed as the paragons of a reckless act of terrorism.

This study, therefore, focuses on August 7<sup>th</sup> 1998 bombing of the U.S. embassy in Nairobi and argues that the memories of the attack are constructed and mediated through visual and performance art. These memories are utilized in the management of trauma and the promotion of reconciliation in a post-terrorism situation in Kenya. An examination of ethnicity reveals its perversity and its threat to Kenya's tenuous nationalism and identity. The recent attack on Westgate Shopping Mall, on 21st September, 2013, and the ongoing Islamic radicalisation of youth in Kenya, means that the narrative of this study has continual resonance.

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## **Preface**

### **Bomb Blasts: A Personal Encounter**

The events of 7<sup>th</sup> August 1998 remain etched vividly in my own memory. On this particular morning, I was with colleagues at work in the Department of Ethnography of the National Museums of Kenya in Nairobi documenting artefacts as part of our routine work. We suddenly heard a loud bang accompanied by a slight tremor but continued unperturbed thinking that this could have been an accident along Museum Hill Road. A few minutes later, however, another colleague rushed in to inform us that something terrible had just happened in the city centre as a huge plume of smoke could be seen billowing somewhere in town. As we dashed out of the office, we could see flying objects in the sky and a thin cloud of smoke and debris engulfed the city centre. Anxious to know what exactly had happened in town, I headed there and on my way I encountered many people running away most of whom could not even explain why they were running away. Egged on by my curiosity I continued moving towards the site oblivious of the danger I was putting myself in but a few blocks away from the site, it occurred to me that a building had collapsed. I joined groups of other people who were discussing in hushed tones their version of what they thought had happened; at this point, no one was sure of the cause of the collapse. There were still people strewn on the pavements bleeding, broken glass was all over the place and even mangled and burning cars were still on the streets. People in all walks of life had started rescue efforts and were soon joined by the Kenya Red Cross, Kenya Army personnel, Kenya Police and the American Marines though the last two appeared more keen to deter people from joining the rescue efforts. Reports in the media revealed that a bomb explosion targeting the American embassy had occurred. What I saw was gruesome, like watching a scene from hell. I will never forget. My cousin, Dr. Robert Bett, who was visiting Kenya from London, was within the vicinity but only received minor bruises; the event nevertheless continues to scare him.

Fast forward to 2005 when the London underground tube bombings occurred. I was then in London on an exchange visit to the British Museum and was staying at the Tavistock Hotel. One of the bombs exploded on a bus outside Tavistock Square, Woburn Place. I had just left the hotel for the British Museum and later watched the whole scene reported on television. The Al Qaeda terrorists claimed responsibility. What I saw on television reminded me of the

Nairobi embassy bombing but this one scared me more as it was very close to where I stayed. I imagined what could have happened to my family had I died away in a foreign land, what memories could they have of me?

In 2007, I was appointed Assistant Director of Museums Sites and Monuments in Kenya responsible for the Central Region.<sup>1</sup> As this was a new position, I decided to base my office in Uhuru Gardens. This is Kenya's biggest memorial dedicated to all those who lost their lives in the struggle for independence. It is also in these gardens that Kenya's flag was first hoisted during the independence celebrations held in these grounds. Part of my responsibilities entailed identifying, documenting and recommending new sites and monuments of national significance to be formally gazetted hence giving them legal protection. My work in Central Province proved the most challenging as I discovered that there were hundreds of sites associated with the Mau Mau history requiring protection. I started engaging with relevant elders to give me the particular histories associated with each of the sites. Through this, I encountered first-hand the difficult histories and memories of the independence struggle. While some were narrated to me, the monuments I sought to protect bore testimony to what happened. I was introduced to two Mau Mau war veterans associations and their factions. Most of these veterans thought I could provide them with a link to the government so their grievances with the colonial administration could be heard. Many are the times they visited me in Nairobi making one request to another. I had to steer very carefully to ensure I made no promise that was beyond the mandate of the National Museums of Kenya. I, however, allowed them to use Uhuru Gardens for their national annual meetings of the Mau Mau War Veterans Association (MMWVA) for I considered the monument was purposely designated for the collective memory of the independence struggle. The site brings to life the interaction between history and collective memory and is important in building Kenyan national identity.

When starting my PhD programme at the University of East Anglia in September 2009 I visited my cousin, Dr Robert Bett, in Brighton one weekend and in the course of our discussion, we talked about the 1998 Nairobi terror attack and the new monument that was built in memory of its victims. We both remembered the terror attack very vividly. Having

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<sup>1</sup> This is an administrative unit of the National Museums of Kenya covering Central, Eastern, and North Eastern provinces and parts of Nairobi and the Rift Valley provinces.

studied in Poland, he discussed the elaborate Polish commemoration of the Holocaust in the form of monuments dotting its countryside. This reminded me of the Mau Mau monuments I had visited in Central Kenya and their associated memories as narrated by the veterans. It was at this point that I decided that the interplay and influences between memory, history and identity would be the focus of my research.

## **Acknowledgements**

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I sincerely thank the staff of the August 7<sup>th</sup> Memorial Park and Documentation Centre for supporting this research. To Ms. Esther Amunga, then General Manager, Jackson Macharia and Lydia Gateere, thank you for allowing me access to the Memorial Park and Documentation Centre's archival materials, photographs and artworks. Your insightful input to my research is deeply appreciated. I am equally grateful to Ali Mwadama, chairman of the August 7<sup>th</sup> Bomb-blast Victims' Association (ASBVA), Douglas Sidialo and Joash Okindo for unreservedly sharing with me what they underwent as victims of this tragedy and for providing me with contacts of other members of the association.

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I wish to pay special tribute to my two academic supervisors, Professor John Mack and Dr. Anne Haour for guiding me throughout the entire process. I am deeply grateful to Prof. John Mack for inspiring me to register for the PhD study and in providing me with the necessary intellectual inspiration and guidance that enabled the completion of this study within the registration period. I shall forever remain indebted for the friendship and confidence you had in me. Dr. Anne Haour's critical comments offered me a different perspective that enriched my dissertation. Getting your feedback expeditiously on my draft chapters made this experience a lot easier. I am beholden to Dr. Fiona Savage for her big heart and readiness to assist whenever I called upon her, and her partner, Leone, for his friendship. Dr. Karen Jacobs, many thanks for your suggestions and comments at the beginning of my study. Furthermore, I want to appreciate the logistical support extended to me by the library staff, especially Patricia Hewitt, Jeremy Bartholomew and Matthew Sillence, without whose knowledge of the library resources accessing these resources would have been difficult for me.

I must also thank my fellow PhD students in the Sainsbury Research Unit for their moral support and comradeship during my stay at the University. Special thanks to Abubakar Sule for his encouragement and social support. I am also grateful to Laura de Becker for her insights on processes of memorialization, especially in Rwanda; a subject that gave inspiration to my research. To Marie Durand, Carlos Rengifo, Stephanie Caffarel, Meg Pinto, Vicky Van Bockhaven, Joyce Dartey, Domenico Sergi, Joanne Lai, and many others whose names are not included here: I appreciated your support. I am also indebted to my cousin, Dr. Robert Bett and family of Brighton, for the encouragement and support each time I visited them while in the UK. I must not forget Moira Ashby of No 3 Bed and Breakfast, Chalk Hill Road, for her hospitality and friendship. Hers was indeed a 'home away from home' for me. I

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

This chapter, which serves as an introduction to my dissertation, is divided into three parts. Part I, ‘Research context and methodology,’ discusses the various research instruments and methodologies used in assembling data analysed in this work by setting out the objectives of the study, the research context and discusses how ethical issues arising from the research have been tackled. Part II, ‘Literature Review,’ analyses available literature on the subject and demonstrates how this study fits into past research on the subject under study and identifies existing gaps. Part III, ‘Conceptual Frameworks,’ defines the main concepts underpinning this research, namely: memory, history and identity to situate them in an appropriate theoretical perspective. The part also identifies lacunae that will be addressed through the research. The subsequent chapters will demonstrate the relevance of these theoretical concepts to this study. Part IV, ‘Conclusion’ gives a summary of the discussions in this chapter.

### **Part I: Research Context and Methodology**

#### **1.1.1. The Setting: Why Nairobi?**

Research for this dissertation was mainly conducted within Nairobi,<sup>2</sup> Kenya’s capital city and the place of the 1998 terror attack targeted at the United States (U.S.) Embassy. According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics’ 2009 population census results (KNBS, 2009), Nairobi has 3, 138, 369 people concentrated in an area of 696 km<sup>2</sup> with a very high population growth of 4.1%. Nairobi is Africa’s twelfth largest city. Administratively it is divided into eight divisions each headed by a District Commissioner. The divisions include Central, Pumwani, Makadara, Kibera, Westlands, Langata, Embakasi and Kasarani. The August 7th Memorial Park is located in the space where the U.S. embassy had stood at the corner of the intersection of Moi Avenue and Haile Selassie Avenue within the city centre. These two avenues are some of Nairobi’s busiest streets with heavy vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Indeed, because of this location, the then Ambassador to the U.S. in Nairobi, Ms

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<sup>2</sup> The word Nairobi is derived from Maasai’s *enkare nyrobi* whose translation is a ‘place of cool waters’. The Maasai pastoralist community grazed their livestock in the plains surrounding this area.

Prudence Bushnell, recommended the relocation of the embassy, fearing for its security (Driscoll, 2001).

Nairobi's history goes back to 1899 when the construction of the Ugandan Railway reached a valley then part of the vast Maasai grazing land. The spot was selected as a railway depot, shunting yard and labourers' camp for the thousands of Indian labourers employed by the British to work on the railway. The flatness and availability of space for expansion, accessibility to water, the cool temperatures and rich fertile soils suitable for agricultural production made it a prime choice for the establishment of the railway depot (Morgan, 1967). Besides these, it lay at the halfway point between Mombasa and Kampala where the railway line was destined. The presence of the railway depot accelerated its growth and by 1907, it replaced Mombasa as the administrative capital of the British East Africa protectorate. Railway interests took preference in selection of the site without due regard to planning, surveying and drainage. Implicitly, the railways officials did not give enough attention to the sanitary requirements of their headquarters, a factor that was later ascribed to the epidemic plagues of 1902 and 1905 (Muringa, 2005).

It was in the same year, 1899, that John Ainsworth, the sub-commissioner of Ukamba Province, shifted his headquarters from Machakos to Nairobi. This move to Nairobi was not well received by the railways administration as it implied the establishment of a parallel administration. Ainsworth established his headquarters to the north of the railway, in the current Museum Hill area. Soon thereafter, rivalry between the two institutions started especially in view of the growth strategies following Ainsworth's establishment of a Township Committee in December 1901 to regulate growth of the town and to ensure proper sanitary and hygienic standards (Ibid). While he ensured fair representation of both the Indian traders and European settlers in the committee, the arrival of more European settlers from South Africa, encouraged by Charles Eliot<sup>3</sup> made it possible for increased settler participation in the committee. The new settlers had racist attitudes against the Indians and Africans, and soon, these found their way to the Township Committee. The plague outbreak at the Indian Bazaar in 1902, therefore, provided the committee with an excuse to formulate segregation policies – mirroring the South African ones – against the Indians and Africans whom they saw as unhygienic and hence blamed for the disease outbreak. Safe enclaves, away from the

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<sup>3</sup> Charles Eliot served as the Governor of the East Africa Protectorate between 1900 and 1904 and was instrumental in encouraging white settlement in the protectorate.

unhygienic Asians and Africans, were carved out for the settlers, and likewise, new areas designated for Asians.

Henceforth new bylaws were developed to deter Africans from settling in Nairobi; they were only allowed to stay as temporary labourers serving the colonial masters. Various other pieces of legislation such as those that controlled their movement and employment, housing, land ownership, and poor infrastructure, were formulated to make it difficult for them to find the urban centres attractive for work and settlement (Muringa, 2005; Otiso, 2005; Werlin 1974). It is these segregation policies and their exclusion from governance - at times effected through coercion and force – that sowed the seeds of resistance. Consequently, out of these circumstances emerged Mau Mau, a movement that played a pivotal role in spearheading Kenya's struggle for independence.

At the height of the independence struggle in the early 1950s, Nairobi was an important meeting point for African elites and politicians who were opposed to colonial rule. Though the Mau Mau liberation war was not fought within the city, over 30,000 arrests were made, most of them Kikuyu. Mau Mau was a military resistance mounted by the Kikuyu-dominated anti-colonial group, against the British Army and their loyalists that took place between 1952 and 1960 (Muringa, 2005). This will have relevance to the discussion on ethnic and national identity analysed in Chapter 5 especially vis-à-vis the challenges of nationhood. The growth of Nairobi at this point also saw increased movement of people from the rural to the urban city in search of employment and other opportunities. Ethnic communities such as the Kikuyu and Kamba, whose traditional settlements were adjacent to Nairobi, were among the first to emigrate and were soon joined by Luo and the Luhya. Other Kenyan communities did not have a significant presence until the late 1970s to early 1980s. It is therefore not by coincidence that a majority of those who died during the 1998 terror attack were from these communities, as will be discussed at length in later chapters where it will be demonstrated that issues of ethnicity even pervaded discussions relating to commemoration.

Nairobi gained city status in 1954 and has grown exponentially since 1963, when Kenya gained independence. It continues to be the seat of government with the Presidency, the Judiciary and most other government ministries having their headquarters in Nairobi. The House of Parliament is also based in Nairobi.

Economically, Nairobi has evolved from a small village to an important economic hub for the East and Central African region as may be attested by indicators in key sectors such as banking and finance, manufacturing and industry to transport and communication. It is the biggest economy in the region and is the market driver in these sectors. The choice of Nairobi as a target by the Al Qaeda terrorists in 1998, it can be argued, was intended to destabilize the region economically and give warning to other countries that they were also in danger of attack for their economic dalliance with America and the Zionist state of Israel. This view has been given weight as Al Qaeda has launched terrorist attacks in almost the entire region in places such as Dar es Salaam, Kampala, Mombasa and Bujumbura. Post 1998 and the escalation of terrorism is the main subject of my Chapters.

Nairobi is also a major diplomatic hub within the African continent. It is currently the only third-world city to host a global headquarters of a major United Nation's agency, the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) with UN-Habitat in Gigiri, Nairobi's diplomatic district. Within this diplomatic district are many other embassies and residences of influential countries such as the United States of America, Canada, Australia and the Netherlands. Nairobi is also the regional headquarters of several international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). The bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi, while intended to inflict pain and puncture America's ego, altered the diplomatic landscape in Nairobi seeing many embassies relocate from the city centre to the sparsely populated and leafy suburbs such as Gigiri. Currently, the August 7<sup>th</sup> Memorial Park stands in the exact location of the bombed U.S. embassy building, the subject of this dissertation.

Kenya has been described as the safari capital of the world. While Nairobi itself is not a prime tourist destination, it is a gateway for many international tourists visiting the country. One of Nairobi's unique attributes is its location next to the Nairobi National Park making it the only city of its size located next to a game reserve. Other attractions include museums, monuments and galleries. In this work I explore a number of monuments associated with different types of memories ranging from World War memorials to those commemorating the independence struggle such as Nyeri Memorial to the August 7<sup>th</sup> Memorial Park which remembers those who died during the 1998 terror attack. All these are referred to at various points in this work.

### 1.1.2. Research Context

In the twentieth century (and the beginning of the twenty-first, I must add), the world has experienced extreme cataclysmic events occasioned by natural and human actions, with the latter having culpability in causing them (Gray & Oliver, 2004). The two World Wars, acts of terrorism and more recently the war on terror have left their imprint as the worst catastrophes of the period. In attempts to come to terms with them, the western world has come up with ‘collective memory’ projects to eternally commit them to history and ascribe meaning to them. Hence, the extensive presence of memorial monuments in Europe dedicated to these disasters, especially the World Wars and the Holocaust. In Africa, by contrast, memorial monuments devoted to the recognition of national independence struggles, though contested, are more common. In Kenya, it is only in the last ten years that a state-driven discussion of national heroes started, whilst historical studies on the struggle for independence have been prevalent.

Little scholarly attention has, however, been given to other equally significant events that define the recent history of the country, such as the 1998 Nairobi terror attack. It is now 16 years since the United States Embassy in Nairobi was attacked by a terrorist bomb leading to the death of 218 people and injuring over 5000 others. The trauma engendered by the Nairobi terror attack is still felt individually and collectively, though, efforts to provide a healing process have been in place since then. One such initiative was the erection of a memorial monument at ground zero, the exact location where the embassy once stood, to “serve as a memorial to all the innocent people who lost their lives. The memorial site is a garden of solace, offering comfort, strength and hope in an environment of relative peace, a tribute to the courage of those who have coped with the injuries sustained or the loss of a loved one, and the condemnation of terrorism.”<sup>4</sup> While the event and impacts of the Nairobi terror attack (Akhahenda, 2002; Driscoll, 2001; Obwogo, 1999) have been studied, there has been no study that approaches this event and site from a social-theoretical perspective where concepts of memory, history and identity underscore the analysis.

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<sup>4</sup> *East African Standard* 23.04.2009

Alongside the World Trade Centre Memorials, Bologna Railway Station Memorial and the Oklahoma City Memorial, the August 7th Memorial has unique connections that make it a worthwhile memorial to study. The bombing of the American Embassy in Kenya by the Osama bin Laden-linked terrorist group heralded the beginning of long-term terrorist activities in eastern Africa affecting the political, economic, and social nexuses in the region. For instance, the memory of the bombing rekindles historical and identity tensions between different ethnic communities in Kenya and exposes Kenyan Muslims to accusations of having sided with the terrorists. These questions of memory, history and identity in Kenya are openly played out in this unique scenario as underscored in this study.

A second context is the need to understand how August 7th Memorial Park has contributed to and catalysed discussions of ethnic and national identity in Kenya, an issue that has been very contentious in the recent past. As the events of the terror attack were overlain with ethnic objectification, I use this to broach the ethnic and national identity discourse in Kenya where discussions so far have tended to glorify a one-sided Kikuyu-centred narrative of the independence struggle. The analyses of Erikson (1959), Connerton (1989) and Huyssens (1995) of how memories and narratives of the past influence the reconstruction and shaping of the present (identities) will give a further context to this research.

### **1.1.3. Research Question**

The main question underlying this dissertation is “how are memories of the 1998 Nairobi terror attack constructed, mediated through visual and performance art and utilized in the management of trauma and the promotion of reconciliation in a post-terrorism situation?”

In addressing this question, I am informed by previous research on the subject of ‘collective memory’, notably that by Halbwachs (1950), Connerton (1989) and West (2008). It is asserted that the past structurally restricts and shapes our understanding of the present while being selectively remembered and evoked in ways that engage with present concerns, needs and power structures. Implicitly, therefore, the memory of the Nairobi terror attack is determined by the present needs and interests of the survivors, the victims’ relatives, government of Kenya and other interested parties such as the American Embassy in Nairobi.

What is the body of knowledge generated by these memories and how have present interests dynamically shaped them? The focus is on the better understanding of the post-terrorism memories in the complete context of post-colonial Kenya.

Pierre Nora's (1989) reflection of the relationship between history and memory provides a framework for analysis in this work. The collapse of 'memory nations' – societies that had long assured the transmission and conservation of collectively remembered values, either ritually or verbally – necessitated the emergence of *lieux de memoire* (sites of memory) embodying memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity exists. This study examines the material, symbolic and functional elements of the August 7th Memorial Park as a *lieu de memoire*.

I also apply Winter's (1995:5-6) observation that "the power to mediate bereavement lies in the strength of 'traditional' forms of social and cultural life as represented in art, poetry and ritual". This assumption leads us to focus on the visual and commemorative performances held at the August 7<sup>th</sup> Memorial Park and their role in enabling the families of the bereaved and the survivors to live with their losses. A series of sites and events are relevant here: the monuments in the Memorial Park, the Mukabi-Klarenbeek Aga Khan Walk's Daily Billboard inscriptions, work of the Banana Arts Studio who responded visually to the terror attack in an exhibition held in the year 2000, and performances by musicians and poets during the annual commemorative events. These and other memorial monuments and commemorative performances will be examined to answer the fundamental questions about how the events of 1998 have been presented, understood and accommodated since.

#### **1.1.4. Research Methodology**

The study of memory has received increased academic consideration in the last few decades with a noted tendency to transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries (Keightley, 2010). Studying it, therefore, requires clarity of research methodology. In this study, I adopt a mix of social science methodologies utilizing anthropological, art-historical and historical approaches in the elicitation of data for this research. My anthropological background is, however, likely to take precedence amongst the techniques applied.

*An analysis of published and archival documents*<sup>5</sup> pertaining to the Nairobi terror attack and the August 7th Memorial Park was undertaken. Documents are a readily accessible source of data in action research (Burns, 1999) that yield significant information for researchers (Stringer, 2007). The documents analysed are in the archives of the August 7th Memorial Park and Documentation Centre, the U.S. embassy in Nairobi, the Nation and Standard media houses, and the African Medical Research Foundation (AMREF). Media reports were also analysed, especially reportage on the escalating cases of terrorism because it is a dynamic phenomenon that is currently unfolding especially along the Kenyan coast. Very few scholarly publications on the recent incidents in Kenya are available. The information elicited was corroborated by the interviews and focus group discussions held during the period of this study.

*Participant observation:* According to Burns (1999), participant observation involves entering the research setting and observing oneself, as well as others in that setting. In this study, I researched through observing visitors to the park and participated in the annual commemorative events at the August 7<sup>th</sup> Memorial Park. By virtue of being a participant, I actively observed interactions, relationships, actions and events at the park. Sitting in the audience, I listened to the speeches, poems, observed the minute of silence and recorded ways in which the visitors respond to the key elements in the park. I documented observations in the form of field notes and took digital images of what was going on. One disadvantage I faced when using participant observation as a research technique was the difficulty to observe a situation while participating at the same time. Despite this challenge, this research technique enabled me to observe non-verbal expressions of participants during commemorations and of those visiting the park. However, I did not find it necessary to have an interpreter during my participation.

*Ethnographic and qualitative interview* is the other instrument I used to elicit data on a wide range of issues investigated, especially, on how the terror attack is remembered, coping with trauma, the perceptions of the functioning of the Park, cases of terrorism, the functioning of the Peace Builder's Kids Clubs, interfaith relations, and so on. Purposive sampling techniques were used to select those being interviewed to include the terror attack survivors

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix 2 for the documents reviewed and type of data elicited.



most of whom are members of the victims association, relatives of the victims, recovery and rescue staff, staff of the Memorial Park, counsellors, select residents of Siyu and Mombasa. I mainly conducted interviews on a one-to-one basis and guided the interviewees through questions and prompts. In other interviews, however, I gave no structure to my participants and just let them talk freely exploring their remembered experiences. Such interviews, the structured and the non-structured, are known to elicit in-depth data.

*Focus group discussion:* Since the 1980s there has been an increase in the use of focus groups to research social issues (Madriz, 2003; Morgan, 1997). I used focus groups as a research technique to gather empirical evidence of the impacts, coping mechanisms and memories of the August 7<sup>th</sup> 1998 terrorist attack, the escalation of terrorism, the activities of the PBKC and interfaith relations through group interaction (Morgan, 1997, 1998). As contextual interactive group discussions, focus groups are used to explore a specific set of issues (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999) and if held on a regular basis can become a social and political forum in their own right (Baker & Hinton, 1999). Focus groups offer a social context for meaning-making and shifting the balance of power from the researcher towards the participants (Wilkinson, 1999).

Fifteen focus group discussions were held in the course of this study each lasting three hours in Nairobi, Uasin Gishu, Pate's Siyu, Kwale and Mombasa. I provided the participants with a framework that guided deliberations and interactions, which enabled the participants to engage with particular issues pertaining to their specific focus group. This framework encouraged active participation of the participants through guiding questions. However, I used guiding questions flexibly to allow for open-ended communicative interactions. This flexibility proved useful as the memories under discussion in some instances elicited pain, trauma and a sense of loss. While this technique enabled a free flow of information and generated extensive data within a short time frame, there were challenges using it at the beginning of the research especially in facilitating the discussions in view of the rawness of the memories under discussion which made some participants very emotional to the verge of breaking down. To overcome this challenge I always adopted a different line of questioning to avoid injuring the interviewee's well-being. At the back of my mind, I considered the well-being of the interviewee more important than my research. In addition to this, there was a tendency for some vocal participants dominating the group discussion. For those dominating

the discussions, I limited the length of time and frequency of speaking to enable the shy ones time to contribute.

### **1.1.5. Ethical Questions**

My research was faced with ethical issues given the sensitivity of the matter I was addressing. Some of my interviewees and members of the focus group discussions sustained injuries and were traumatized (and some are still recovering), while others lost loved ones during and in the aftermath of the events of August 7<sup>th</sup> 1998. The nature of the suffering borne by the victims, and the fact that the tragic event happened quite recently, made it difficult for them to open up, as they had not fully come to terms with what happened. Another equally difficult aspect was their bitterness over compensation by the American government and the lack of any support by their own government as evidenced by the following statement by Mr Ali Mwadama.<sup>6</sup> “...after the blast sometimes we even wish we were made of steel, glass or concrete, like the Cooperative Building or Ufundi Cooperative House which alongside others were damaged by the blast but were fully compensated while human beings ...were left to suffer and die from their injuries”. I therefore navigated this territory very carefully ensuring no further injury to their suffering was inflicted. I cultivated some sense of trust by being introduced to most of my interviewees by the Park management and by attending my early meetings as an observer without taking any notes. I assured them that the research was mainly for my dissertation and nothing will be published or used for any other purpose without their express consent. I accepted the counsellors’ view of the sanctity of the counsellor-patient confidentiality in their work; hence my unequivocal assurances that the identity of the interviewees will not be revealed. Instead, I do not use their real names to refer to their identities when they withheld consent. Similarly, the sensitivity and security risks attached to discussing some aspects of terrorism, such as the perpetrators and government responses posed a challenge during fieldwork as some respondents were reluctant to discuss them. In respect of their wishes, I have changed their names, where necessary, based on the agreements I had with the respondents, and in some instances, my own judgement guided what identities to apply. It is critical that the identity of these sources becomes protected.

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<sup>6</sup> Mr Mwadama is the Chairman of the August Seventh Bomb Blast Victims Association and made this statement during the 13<sup>th</sup> Commemorative Anniversary

## Part II: Literature Review

In Kenya, there has been little scholarly literature devoted to the subject of memory, especially of the events surrounding the August 7<sup>th</sup> Memorial Park. This research on ‘Remembering the 1998 Nairobi Terror Attack: Cultural and Trauma Memory and the Reconciliation of a Nation’ contributes towards filling this scholarly lacuna in literature. I start this section by reviewing what has been written on memories of this attack before turning to other bodies of knowledge to place the study in a fuller context.

Sydney Kasfir’s work (2005) is one of the few studies to have dealt with the subject. She focuses on how the Nairobi terror-attack brought Kenyans in all walks of life together in a rare show of unity not witnessed in other traumatic circumstances, notably the ethnic clashes in the Rift Valley in the early 1990s. She discusses how visual artists from the Banana Arts Studio created their own narratives depicting terrorism. In her view, many of the artworks only capture the confusion that ensued immediately after the blast. One artwork, however, that particularly drew her attention was a painting titled ‘Heartbook’ which intended to embed this terror action into historical records that would be opened up time and again for remembrance and history. The aspect of healing and reconciliation is what these artists hoped to transmit. She has recently written (2012) on memorialisation processes in Uganda where she examines Buganda’s public monuments and artistic expressions to reveal the ambiguities of memorialising the past in the present. Her focus, however, is the narration of heroism and imagined collective representation of various kinds that are staged in significant public places. Her discussion on the ways artists and the public renegotiate their interpretation of the monuments with their own agenda about memory informs this study.

Obwogo (1999) focuses on the terror attack, the rescue efforts, and the suffering it inflicted on its survivors analysing in depth what he identifies as America’s culpability while advocating a just compensation for all its victims. Akhahenda’s (2002) work, on the other hand, highlights the unity displayed in the aftermath of the attack and offers a historical analysis of the political processes towards a united Kenya, beginning from the pre-independence period, to President Kenyatta’s *Harambee*<sup>7</sup> nation to the ethnically-polarised nation following the introduction of multi-party politics in the early 1990s. He, therefore, sees

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<sup>7</sup> Slogan adopted by President Kenyatta, which became a rallying call to ‘pull together’ in unity and for nation-building.

this attack serving to bridge the ethnic and political divisions threatening to tear the nation apart. Whereas my research also describes the attack, rescue efforts and the quest for justice, it goes beyond Obwogo's by examining how this attack is represented in visual and performance art and how these media contribute to providing closure to the trauma it engendered. My chapter on national identity, though, inspired by Akhahenda's analysis, broaches the subject by providing an in-depth analysis of its origins in pre-independent Kenya and its perpetration by post-independent Kenyan leaders.

Having stated that literature on the subject of this dissertation is very limited for Kenya, there is work on similar themes elsewhere in Africa. Theses in South Africa studies have sought to demonstrate the role of memorialisation in promoting healing after apartheid, an approach that also formed a key plank in the work of the Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission. Coombes (2003) discusses extensively the South African scenarios using different examples. She mainly focuses, though, on the symbolic transactional roles of monuments in engendering debates on democracy and the need to build a united post-apartheid South Africa that is accommodating of all while promoting healing and reconciliation. Her work engages with different forms of historical knowledge and experience through a variety of material and visual means in museums, monuments and the re-animation of particular public spaces. One example is the transformation of the Robben Island from a prison into a memorial shrine dedicated not to the history of suffering but to the triumph of the human spirit over suffering and hardship. It was to be treated as a monument preserving the country's political history in a forward-looking way, like the Martin Luther King Centre in Atlanta.

Another example that has dominated memorial studies in the early years of this decade - and still does - is the genocide in Rwanda where several memorials have been constructed in memory of the hundreds of thousands killed during the genocide. Bay & Donham (2006) discuss the violence in Rwanda instigated by a Hutu-led government by appealing to the collective memory of the pre-colonial and colonial era depiction of the Tutsi as foreigners exploiting them. The Hutu resorted to violence as a means of re-establishing the order with them remaining at the helm of leadership hence the genocide. They examine the means through which the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) government has sought to create and reshape the collective memory of a unified post-genocide Rwanda-wide vide

institutionalization of the *gacaca*<sup>8</sup> courts; promotion of patriotism; and creation of new national symbols. They elaborate on the commemorations and memorials preserving the memory of the genocide while laying emphasis on the negative impacts of ethnic division. While acknowledging the RPF government claims to promotion of democracy, human rights, and commemorations as means to creating a peaceful Rwanda, Bay & Donham (Ibid) point out the government charade that completely mask out the atrocities committed by the RPF. Similarly, RPF has ensured that there are no memorials marking any of the atrocities they executed. Caplan (2007) and Clark & Kauffman (2009) describe the chain of genocide memorials in Rwanda erected not only in the city but also even in the villages – in schools and churches - to pass the message that those who died are not going to be forgotten; the memorials prove to those denying the genocide that the people are actually dead. Its commemoration to quote Rwanda's President is 'a means of seeking appropriate sustainable ways of doing justice, achieving reconciliation and building a strong vibrant society for all Rwanda' (Clark & Kauffman, 2009).

Breed (2008) interrogates the role of theatre as a tool for nation-building in Rwanda in the aftermath of the genocide. Her focus is of two parallel initiatives, she studies the state-driven theatre companies performing at national level with intent to create a re-imagined Rwandan identity, and grassroots theatre associations performing at community level. These initiatives, she observes, embody nationalist slogans of reconciliation through text, song and dance proclaiming that Rwanda is one country with the same culture and language. While slogans and government rhetoric of reconciliation are central in both groups' performances, she considers state-driven theatre is impeding genuine reconciliation because it is politically motivated, unlike the more altruistic grassroots ones. She observes that in grassroots theatre (2008:47) "survivors and perpetrators use theatre to unite their communities; dancing, singing, and acting together have enabled them to forge new relationships; and to reconcile and heal themselves". In some of these performances, theatre has been used to activate memories of the conflict and to promote confessions in support of the *gacaca* courts aiding reconciliation and healing. De Becker (2012) examines the commemorative practices of the 1994 Rwandan genocide that remember this conflict at a national, public and official level. She mainly focuses her analysis on the national genocide memorials, with specific attention

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<sup>8</sup> A system of community justice system inspired by tradition initiated in Rwanda in 2001 to deliver justice at the grassroots level in the wake of the 1994 genocide.

on the bone memorials at Nyamata, Bisesero and Ntarama and the Kigali Memorial Centre in Kigali. Just as De Becker's analysis of the Rwanda memorials reveals how the genocide is remembered, I adopt a similar approach to examine how the August 7<sup>th</sup> Memorial Park's monuments and objects in the Documentation Centre remembers the Nairobi bombing tragedy.

A paradigmatic shift in the understanding of monuments is that by the German anti-monument movement discussed by Young (1993) which challenge the ethics and aesthetics of the very notion of building an artifice to represent violence that led to the extermination of many lives. While aware of their duty to remember, but aesthetically sceptical of the traditional forms of memorial monuments previously exploited to objectify Nazism, a new generation of artists has sought to challenge traditional practices of monument-making by designing counter-monuments. The first of these counter-monuments was built in 1986 at the invitation of the city of Harburg to create a "Monument against Fascism, War and Violence- and for Peace and Human Rights". The artist, Jochen Gerzes designed a twelve-meter-high, one-meter-square obelisk of hollow aluminium coated with lead, inviting citizens and visitors to Harburg to inscribe their names and messages on its surface. As it filled up, it was gradually lowered into the ground until it eventually disappeared, leaving the memories of those who visited the site previously as the only tangible trace of the monument. Counter-monuments are seen as the inversion of phallic victory monuments: they are monuments to defeat, in a sense, not monuments to the genocide (Young, 1993). The 'counter-monumentalists' argue that the static monuments have forgotten the reason for their creation by assuming "...the polished, finished veneer of a death mask, unreflective of current memory, unresponsive to contemporary issues" (Ibid: 46) inevitably driving memory into oblivion. To enliven and make them relevant in conveying the impacts of catastrophes like the holocaust, this movement calls for their liberation from their indifference through community participation. This is achieved through commemorative performances that give meaning to their existence. Its advocates further argue that by dematerializing memory, people approach them with their own subjectivity while remembering that it is their civil duty not to let the past be repeated. In Gerzes's words, lacking of a permanent memorial, "the visitors are left standing in remembrance, looking inward for memory" (Young, 1993: 46).

Bordner (1992) explores the subject of publicly constructed memory in modern America discussing different phases of commemoration in Cleveland, Ohio. In the context of America's Vietnam War Memorial, he distinguishes between two types of memory, vernacular and official. Vernacular memory, he asserts is that originating from those ordinary people most directly involved in the war: the veterans who participated and those who supported the war who advocate a monument commemorating all those who fought and died. In contrast, are the proponents of an official monument dedicated to patriotism and ideals of national duty exhibited by all Americans. The contest between patriotism and grief or sorrow underlay public debate in the case of the Vietnam War Memorial. "Vernacular expressions convey what social reality feels like rather than what it should be like. Its very existence threatens the dogmatic and timeless nature of official expression" (ibid: 75). He then presents what happened in Cleveland in terms of public commemoration during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries where emphasis oscillated between vernacular and official expressions to a cultural hybrid resulting in the creation of the Cleveland Cultural Gardens serving the interests of both American patriotism and ethnic nationalists. Public memory of the Vietnam War emanates from this intersection of vernacular and official expression of memory. However, a decline in the cultural power of official symbols in the 1960s, he suggests, explains the emergence of vernacular interests in the Vietnam Veteran Memorial itself (Bordner in Gillis, 1994).

In *Tourists of History*, Sturken (2009) examines kitsch objects as America's touristic, consumerist response to trauma illustrated through two recent post-Cold War period terrorist attacks: the April 19, 1995, bombing of the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City and the September 11, 2001, on the World Trade Centre and the aftermath of each. She argues that the emergence of kitsch objects<sup>9</sup> has created a touristic relationship to these two traumatic events promoting the notion of Americans' innocence while obfuscating the real global, political context of these attacks (Gerson, 2009). Having said this, she argues that the 'kitsch effects' are only temporary and with time, traumatic memory returns. This assertion of 'American innocence' resonates with the effects the American embassy bombing in Nairobi had on Kenyans. They too have talked of their innocence. However, rather than

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<sup>9</sup> Used in this context in reference to mass-produced objects embodying a particular kind of pre-packaged sentiment but conveying the message that the sentiment is universally shared. Memory kitsch encourages visitors to feel sense for the loss of lives in a way that discourages any discussion of the context in which the lives were lost.

‘kitschification’ of trauma as seen in the two American memorials in question, the August 7<sup>th</sup> Memorial Park is devoid of it but acknowledges the politics involved, blaming the Americans for their suffering. While there are sentimental objects on exhibition in the Documentation Centre, these are not kitsch in the sense examined by Sturken (ibid). The park represents their memories while mediating their trauma instead of seeking the palliative comfort of kitsch.

One common strand uniting all these studies is their intention to heal the traumatic effects of the tragedies they commemorate while ensuring that their histories are remembered. However, in the South African and Rwandan studies, reconciliation is highlighted. This is informed by the discord prevailing among its different communities based on their recent histories of apartheid and the genocide respectively. The need for internal harmony is what their memorials promote.

As previously stated, there is limited literature in Kenya on the subject of memory, especially that touching on how monuments represent the collective memories of particular events such as the 1998 Nairobi U.S. embassy bombings. This study therefore intends to fill this gap by not only generating data on the monument dedicated to the memories of those who perished during the attack, but will also refer to other monuments relating to other types of memories and their linkage to questions of identity in Kenya.

### **Part III: Conceptual Frameworks**

Defining ‘collective memory’ is not an easy task. It is a term that has been used in very different ways across disciplines ranging from psychology to anthropology, art history to history, and political science to literary criticism. It is at once a rich and a complex abstraction. Despite the differences, the common feature uniting these approaches is that ‘collective memory’ is a conceptualisation of memory that transcends the individual and is shared by the group. Simply put, it is a collective concept for all knowledge that directs behaviour and experience in the interactive framework of a society and one that remains through generations in repeated societal practice. It is not, however, distinct from individual memory since it is clearly entwined with it.



While it was initially studied as part and parcel of psychology, its social dimensions were given serious attention in the early twentieth century by Bartlett (1932: 296). His main argument is that the memory of individuals is influenced fundamentally by the social contexts in which they are engaged. In his formulation he posits “that collectives in and of themselves, do not have some sort of memory”. Instead, social organization gives a framework into which all detailed remembrance must fit; and in that, it very powerfully influences both the manner and the matter being remembered. This position emphasises ‘memory *in* the group’ and not ‘memory *of* the group’ – a perspective shared by Halbwachs (1992). Durkheim also contributed a brief early discussion of commemorative rituals in ‘primitive’ societies attributing “collective effervescence” to human cultural creativity. Durkheim (1915:347) derives the characteristic attributes of an individual from the society, which gives the individual a distinct character and a special place among other beings. On the other hand, society can only exist in and through individuals’ shared beliefs, traditions and aspirations as members of a group. Without individuals, there would be no society. Collective effervescence excites physical and mental life, resulting in an outer and ‘inward transformation’ of the individual that serves to sustain group life. It is through this intoxicating feeling of hyper-excitement that individuals become aware of the collective dimensions of their bodies, and motivated to pursue impersonal ends and follow ‘collective rules of conduct’ (Shilling & Mellor, 2011). In this, he sees creativity being a product of the collective group rather than simply individuals, as previously advocated (Halbwachs, 1992).

The problem with Durkheim’s formulation, though, is that it only addresses itself to periods of heightened cultural activity and does not explain what happens to the group during ‘ordinary’ times of inactivity (Douglas, 1980). It is here, perhaps, that we find Halbwachs’ theory of ‘collective memory’ most useful as he explains that during such times, ritual and ceremonial acts of commemoration stimulate the community to collectively recall certain events from the past enhancing group solidarity. He transposes the concept of ‘collective memory’ from a biological to a cultural context and states that, “it is in society that individuals normally acquire their memories. It is also in society, that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories”, (Halbwachs, 1992:38). Implicitly, it is through the socialization process of a group that an individual is able to remember and reconstruct meanings in a coherent way. Assmann (2001) and Connerton (1989: 3) refer to the same concepts as ‘cultural memory’ and ‘social memory’ respectively. Connerton, however, takes a step back

to Durkheim to elaborate that while our experiences of the present largely depend on our knowledge and images of the past to qualify the present social order, it is through ritual performances that these experiences are transmitted and sustained.

The ritual performances that Connerton (Ibid: 72-73) mentions are not only represented in words and images, they are also present in habitual remembering sedimented in the body's re-enactment of the past through incorporated and inscribed practices (Rowlands, 1993). I will apply this concept of transmission to examine forms of behaviour such as the bowing of heads, kneeling in prayer or making bodily marks of the cross during visits to the August 7th Memorial Park by survivors and their relatives, especially during the annual commemoration. The monuments, photographs, documentaries and flyers used at the site provide evidence of the inscriptive practices of social memory that informs this study.

However, there has been criticism levelled against Halbwachs for seemingly placing emphasis on the group to the detriment of the role of the individual in recollections of the past. Kansteiner (2002) and Margalit (2002: 51) introduce new terms: 'collected memory' and 'common memory' respectively which denote the same thing, that is, both terms "aggregate the memories of all those people who remember a certain episode which each of them experienced individually". What they aim to do is to relocate the individual within the collective, thereby emphasizing the role of human agency in the construction of shared or social memories.

Arguably, this criticism is a semantic one, which elaborates on but does not invalidate Halbwachs' concept of 'collective memory'. In my understanding, the memories of terrorism are still to be approached through the broader 'collective memory' frame as advanced by Halbwachs and Connerton (ibid). It is through the annual commemorative performance rituals of narration, poetry and speeches that the survivors are able to remember the details collectively. With time the memories start weakening at the individual level and risk thinning out if left to individual remembrance. This frame of analysis is embedded in my study of the memories of the bomb blast: I argue that it is through their gatherings to commemorate the events and share their experiences that the memories of this tragedy are transmitted. As the subsequent chapters will demonstrate, their annual commemorative rituals give them the opportunity to reminisce about the past and through this reminiscing (through oral narratives,

songs, performance and visit to the monuments) they are comforted and have the effects of personal trauma pacified.

My second framework of discussion relates to the contentious relation between *collective memory and history*. In Halbwachs' formulation, 'formal history' differs from memory: "History", he says, "is dead memory, a way of preserving pasts which with we no longer have an 'organic' experiential relation" (ibid). To distinguish between collective memory and history Halbwachs (1980; 1992) further elaborated on these concepts breaking them into autobiographical memory, historical memory, history and collective memory. Nora's (1989: 8-9) elucidation of these two terms provides a useful insight into how they relate to each other. According to Nora, memory and history are in fundamental opposition:

"memory ...remains in permanent evolution, open to dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived but remains perpetually tied to the present while history, because it is a secular and intellectual production of the past, calls for analysis and criticism. In this, history is a critical discourse that is antithetical to memory and always seeks to exterminate it (Nora, 1989:8)".

In this line of reasoning, Nora does not imply that analytical history supplants memory; instead, it is difficult to categorise equivocally accounts as belonging to either.

History and memory are always considered to be in conflict because the two approaches have different aspirations of representing the past. History presents an accurate account of the past even when that record reflects negatively on the people being represented; in collective memory, in contrast, negative aspects may be omitted in representing what type of people we are. Novick (1999:3-4) records this difference thus: "to understand something historically is to be aware of its complexity, to have sufficient detachment to see it from multiple perspectives, to accept the ambiguities, including moral ambiguities, of protagonists' motives and behaviour. Collective memory simplifies; sees events from a single, committed perspective; is impatient with ambiguities of any kind; reduces events to mythic archetypes".

This understanding of the relations between history and memory has recently been critiqued because historiography has broadened its remit beyond the 'traditional' discipline to include

wider social and cultural fields (Novick, 1999). Novick doubts whether historians can succeed in being objective arguing that because history is written by people in the present for particular purposes, the selection and interpretation of sources is always arbitrary. If on the other hand 'experience' (read memory) occurs by way of narrative, then, there is no original, unmediated experience that can be recovered (as this will have been pre-selected). Burke (1989) remarks that history should perhaps be more appropriately defined as a particular type of cultural memory, because, "neither memories nor histories seem objective any longer". In both cases, we are learning to take account of conscious or unconscious selection, interpretation and distortion - processes that are socially conditioned. Clearly, memory itself has a historiography (Samuel, 1994). Implicitly, any separation of the two is difficult.

New conceptual dimensions continue to emerge following the increased interest in 'collective memory'; many of these tend to reduce collective memory to the effect of human agency. However, to maintain and enhance the understanding of Halbwachs' materiality, 'cultural memory' is a term increasingly being applied. Assmann's (1995) espousal of this term becomes relevant to this discussion. He breaks cultural memory into 'communicative memory' and 'cultural memory' with the former used to refer to the everyday communications about the meaning of things from the past that are still remembered (for up to between 80 and 100 years) and can, therefore, be influenced by contemporary events, thus making them susceptible to instability. Cultural memory, on the other hand, comprises reusable texts, images, monuments, buildings and rituals (commemorative) which are particular to a society at a given historical period. Their adoption helps in the stabilization and objectification of that society's image as they are designed to recall fateful events in the history of the collective. A further elaboration by Assmann (ibid) differentiates between 'potential' and 'actual' cultural memories and goes on to argue that when representations of the past are stored in museums, archives and libraries, they constitute potential memory. However, once these representations are adopted and given new meaning in a new social and historical context they become actual memory. In this elaboration, it becomes possible, then, that some specific representations of the past can traverse all these stages from communicative memory through potential memory to actual memory; and the reverse is equally possible. This conceptualization also lays emphasis on the importance of the present, because communicative memory is mainly about remembering events that happened within the lifetime of its producers and consumers.

There is resonance between the interpretations by Assmann (ibid) and Halbwachs' conceptualization of collective memory for they both end up having this difference defined by a lineal time trajectory that positions collective memory giving way to history. This conceptual frame is appropriate for interpreting the results of my study for it deals with different types of memories associated with the World Wars, the Mau Mau memories relating to the struggle for independence and those generated by the 1998 terror attack. It is by positioning history and collective memory in such a continuum that the two are recognized as a mixture of ways of relating to the past (Boyd & Werstch, 2009).

*Collective memory and materiality* is the other conceptual framework that I consider in this dissertation. Materiality, Miller (2005:1) asserts, "...represents the merely apparent, behind which lies that which is real. It remains foundational to most people's stance in the world; without it, indeed, it becomes difficult to define humanity, as it is central to the way we understand ourselves. It is the force behind humanity's bid to transform the world to conform to our beliefs on how it should be" (ibid: 2). While this stance on materiality is fundamental in almost all aspects of man's engagement with the world from fields as diverse as religion, science, cosmology to finance, I narrow its application to the relationship between collective memory and materiality, specifically focusing on how memories are externalized by human agencies into materials and subsequently, how these materials influence human actions.

In developing his arguments in support of a theory of 'things' or material culture, Miller based his analysis on Goffman's (1975) *Frame Analysis*<sup>10</sup> and Gombrich's (1979) *The Sense of Order*<sup>11</sup> to arrive at what he termed "the humility of things" (Miller, 1987:85-108). He concluded that objects are important not because of their intrusive physical presence, but often because we do not 'see' them. The less we are aware of them, the more powerful they are in determining our expectations by setting the scene and ensuring normative behaviour, without being open to challenge. Implicitly, material objects have the capacity to fade out of focus and into the 'environment' yet continue prompting us to behave in certain ways.

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<sup>10</sup> Goffman argues that much of our behaviour is cued by expectations, which are determined by the frames that constitutes the context of action.

<sup>11</sup> In his examination of artworks, Gombrich asserts that when a frame is appropriate we simply do not see it, because it seamlessly conveys to us the appropriate mode by which we should encounter that which it frames. Put differently, it is the frame, rather than any quality independently manifested by the artwork, that elicits the special response we give it as art.

Bourdieu (1977) likewise shows that objects condition human actors by becoming the primary means through which people become social beings. Hegel had (1807) taken this further “suggesting that there can be no fundamental separation between humanity and materiality-that everything that we are and do arises out of the reflection upon ourselves’ given by the mirror image of the process by which we create form and are created by this process”. Simply put, we understand ourselves through the object forms we create, or alternately, the objects we create ‘make’ us by acting on us through their own agency.

This thesis is further inspired by recent contributions by Bruno Latour (1999) and Alfred Gell (1998) in working towards a theory of *material culture and materiality* especially with the introduction of the concept of agency. In his formulation, Latour (ibid), takes away the role of human as agents and applies it to the non-human world, demonstrating that material forms do also possess the agency that can cause effects. He therefore concludes that what matters is often not the entities themselves, human or otherwise, but rather the network of agents and the relationships between them (Miller, 2005:12). Gell’s (1998) approach on the other hand focuses on inferred intentionality where we assume that there must have been a kind of social agency for an effect to be encountered. Latour’s and Gell’s perspectives differ in the sense that while the former lays emphasis on non-humans below the level of human agency, the latter looks through objects to the embedded human agency they contain. How does this play out in the externalization of memory through materiality?

Gell’s perspective suggests that it is through the actions of humans that a monument was conceptualized, designed and installed with the sole purpose of collating, externalizing and transmitting memories. In the context of this thesis we may assert that without the concerted efforts of designers and contractors the August 7<sup>th</sup> Memorial Park would not generate and communicate the collective memory of the tragic event that happened in 1998. As a monument, it embodies human agency bringing together the memories of both those who perished in the terror attack and those surviving the trauma, and collectively distributes the memories to a wider people hence materializing their engagement with the world.

A discussion of collective memory is never complete without looking at the means of *memory transmission*. An important development in the understanding of its working was the shift of focus from the intellectual to the external, material, forms of memory in ‘artificial’

sites. Over millennia, however, there has been a whole range of systems developed to transmit memory starting from orality where reliance on memory was the norm in what Le Goff (1992) refers to as prehistoric times, to the written word, print culture and lastly to electronic formats in the twentieth century (Ong, 1982; Hutton, 1993; Goody, 1986). A further elaboration of transmission of cultural heritage or memory is provided by Goody and Watts' (1968) discussion comparing literate and non-literate societies. In the latter, all beliefs, values and forms of knowledge are transmitted orally through words or imitations and stored in human memory. This way, what is transmitted resides in the particular range of meanings and attitudes that are attached to that particular society's verbal symbols. Implicitly, oral transmission does not enable the development of 'dictionary definitions' or allow words to accumulate successive layers of historically validated meanings which they acquire in literate culture. Instead, the meaning of each word is ratified in a succession of real circumstances, vocal enunciation and physical gestures, all of which combine to localize both its particular denotation and its accepted connotative meanings (ibid). Definitions become localised within the group.

In non-literate societies, what is remembered is that which is of practical significance to one's experiences of social relationships. Bartlett (1925) and Halbwachs (1950) argue that whatever has ceased to be relevant to an individual is discarded by the process of forgetting while what continues to be of social relevance is stored in memory and that anything new is incorporated by a process of interpretation and rationalization. Language is the effective medium of transacting this process of remembering or forgetting. However, not everything whose relevance has ceased is easily forgotten: mnemonic devices, recital under ritual conditions and employed 'people of memory', and so on, offer resistance to new processes of interpretation ensuring that not everything from the past is forgotten.

Conversely, in literate societies, historical sensibility of the past is transmitted through historical records. With writing, a more general and abstract kind of relationship between the word and its referent that is less closely connected with the particularities of person, space and time is established than obtains in oral communication (Goody and Watt, 1968). Based on this premise, it is critical to note that with the widespread use of the alphabet, "the idea of 'logic' – an immutable and impersonal mode of discourse – arose. And it was only then that the sense of the human past as an objective reality was formally developed; a process in

which the distinction between ‘myth’ and ‘history’ took a decisive importance” (ibid: 44). While written culture has made literature easily available, it does not impose itself forcefully or as uniformly as is the case with oral transmission of cultural tradition.

In my study of the August 7<sup>th</sup> Memorial Park, I explore how a mix of these transmission modes have functioned to keep the memory of the tragic bomb blast alive and how the same modes have benefitted the processes of trauma healing, social cohesion and identity building.

The other important framework applied in this study is the understanding of the *concepts of ethnicity<sup>12</sup> and nationalism<sup>13</sup>*. These two phenomena have become so visible in many aspects of Kenyan life that I find them difficult to ignore in a study focussed on memorialisation. The study of nationalism, (Anderson, 1983; Eriksen, 1994) as an artefact of cultural processes is a relatively new topic for anthropologists – it was for many years left to political scientists, historians and sociologists – having only attracted their interest towards the end of the nineteenth century. Anderson (1983:6) defines the nation thus: “it is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.” By ‘imagined’ he means people defining themselves as members of a nation “will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the mind of each lives the image of their communion” (ibid:6). Behind the ‘imagining’ is a strong force of horizontal comradeship and sentiment shared by those in the ‘communion’. A central tenet in Anderson’s notion of the ‘imagined’ nation is language. He asserts that the arrival of new forms of communication, especially the print media and the use of vernacular language in the 16<sup>th</sup> century catalysed this sense of belonging as it united people across large stretches of time and space. The centrality of language as a membership ticket to this collectively-imagined nation strengthens the bond among all those subscribing to this imagination, hence the readiness with which people are willing to sacrifice themselves for the nation.

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<sup>12</sup> Refers to aspects of social relationships between groups, which consider themselves, and are regarded by others, whom they are aware of, and with whom they enter into relationships, as being culturally distinctive.

<sup>13</sup> See (Gellner’s, 1983:1, Eriksen, 1994) definition: ‘a theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones’. According to this view, there is a peculiar link between ethnicity and the state with the former’s ideology dominating the latter. However, in a poly-ethnic state like Kenya, nationalism as an ideology expresses the shared civil rights rather for all the citizens.



This centrality of language is challenged by Billig (1995:30) who suggests that “language does not create nationalism, so much as nationalism creates language,” arguing that while nations may be imagined communities “the patterning of the imaginings cannot be explained by the differences of language for languages may have to be imagined as distinct entities.” Billig (ibid) additionally disagrees that print capitalism rationalized the importance of vernacular languages in fostering the consciousness of belonging because in the mid nineteenth century large parts of a nation’s population were still illiterate. They could not therefore be influenced to imagine belonging to a nation if this was restricted to the ‘reading class.’ In this regard, Anderson fails to show how the imagined community of the nation extended to include members of different classes.

McCrone (1998:6) criticises Anderson for not developing an account in which the imagining is carried out and sustained by paying more attention to the aspect of ‘community’ in nationhood beyond its ‘imagining’ alone. Social anthropologists have, thus, sought to strengthen Anderson’s analysis. Eriksen (1993) like Anderson adopts anthropological approaches in identifying the nation as a cultural community describing the process of reification through which national traditions and identities emerge. He illustrates how this happened in Norway where an urban middle class created a ‘national’ culture borrowing elements from different traditions and presenting it as authentic Norwegian national culture, enabling people to talk of their culture as though it was a ‘constant’. Gellner (1983) is cynical of this form of nationalism seeing it as an arbitrary historical invention, though acknowledging that such devices can be used as a framework to build and foster the sense of national belonging.

In Kenya, the construction of a national identity has always been tenuous. Instead of pulling towards the centre, each ethnicity has tended to assert its own identity<sup>14</sup> leading to persistent tensions in the construction and portrayal of a unified sense of national identity. In a poly-ethnic and a linguistically diverse country like Kenya, any approach to national identity on the basis of attributes such as language and boundaries alone fails. Instead, processes of social construction as advocated by Barth (1969) become relevant to the Kenyan situation. Following the 2007/2008 post-election violence in Kenya, which brought the country to the brink of civil war, a new institution aptly named the National Cohesion and Integration

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<sup>14</sup> See 13 above

Commission (NCIC) was formed with a view to promoting national unity. It is still too early to determine whether this commission will succeed or not. The on-going interaction between the different communities within the confines of the nation generates external differences but at the same time highlights certain similarities; the commission seeks to exploit the latter to forge national identity. Jenkins (1996; 1997) asserts that this dialectical movement involves the selective use of markers and indicators, which are changeable over time to bring about social separation, exclusion and inclusion. In this sense, national identity is historically and locally variable but bound up with ethnicity.

To Cohen (1985), all communities are 'imagined', constructed through the symbolism of 'belonging' and 'not belonging'. Hence, distinctions are made based on 'them' and 'us'. These are formulated most critically – and carefully – at the margins, in the definition of boundaries and the identification of the different characteristics of those considered to be within the group and those outside it. He posits that while not everyone within the 'community' is alike; there are circumstances and situations in which people attach more importance to their similarities than their differences. These are symbolized in various ways, including the use of names, images and ideas, which nevertheless require interpretation to be understood. In other words, the processes through which these symbols are created, manipulated and appropriated command attention.

Cohen's (1985) and Anderson's (1983) conceptualization of the construction and sustainability of national identity can as well be interpreted through Connerton's (1989) concept of incorporated and inscribed practices. Elias (1996) and Jenkins (2007) argue that the depth of meaning associated with symbolization increases with a larger 'collectivity', like a nation where members do not know each other but 'imagine' belonging together as advocated by Anderson (1983). In such circumstances, symbols create loyalty and a sense of oneness. An examination of the Kenyan national identity, while contentious, relies on inscribed symbols – flag, national anthem, currency, maps and national monuments. These symbols not only instil a sense of nationalism but also provoke habitual responses in their deference (Bordieu, 1977; Connerton, 1989; Elias, 1996). Standing at attention on the hoisting of the national flag and singing of the national anthem has unconsciously been incorporated in our minds eliciting such habitual reaction. Arguably, though, this does not always equate to a deep feeling of belonging and deference to the Kenyan national identity. A

recent statement by Dr. Sally Kosgei<sup>15</sup> supports this view as she asserted that, as a government Minister, the flag only aided her in evading traffic jams - otherwise it did not symbolize anything meaningful to her. Given that she made the statement in a meeting where she shifted her political support to a politician from her own ethnic group, this already suggests the importance Kenyans attach to ethnic over national identity.

National identity is something new that was taught in schools and narrated in public political meetings and does not, therefore, evoke strong sentiment of nationalism among all Kenyans. The common national narrative of a national identity born of shared objectives, history and collective memories of the past is often an empty rhetoric serving the interests of the privileged few at the centre and in power. Those in the periphery with a different narrative of the nation are discriminated against and excluded from national discourse and resource allocation - hence the tension, which, if not attended to (as has been the case), often leads to strife. The struggle of the disenfranchised against the centre perpetuates the tensions in the idea of national identity. Since Kenya's national identity is constructed from the centre, it becomes necessary to engage the periphery in the identity discourse if their views are to be incorporated. These views notwithstanding, I still agree with Anderson's (1983) and Castel's (1997) conceptualization of nationalism as they assert that in the final analysis, nationalism is culturally and politically constructed, as are all identities. While Kenyans may have diverse communities, our shared history is generally underpinned by experiences that are common to all the people. Chapter 5 will discuss issues of ethnic and national identity and how the terror attack brought to the fore the ambivalent nature of these concepts.

Another important conceptual strand underpinning my arguments derives from Turner's (1982) application of Van Gennep's sociological insights on rites of passage. Turner introduces the word 'liminality' denoting the life-crisis transition rituals that places the participants or initiates in a state of 'betwixt and between'; a state of being 'almost there' but 'not yet there'; a period during which cultural symbols, as previously experienced by the initiates, are inverted, mixed and re-combined enabling them to reflect on their culture and its rules. They go through "a period and area of ambiguity, a sort of social limbo which has few of the attributes of either the preceding or subsequent profane social or cultural statuses"

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<sup>15</sup>Kenya's Minister for Agriculture and a former Head of Public Service as reported in the *Daily Nation* 6.02.2011

(Turner 1982). If in liminality normative societal structures are *suspended and re-worked*, (my words) then, these liminal situations could be seen as the settings in which new models, symbols and paradigms emerge as seedbeds of cultural creativity. These new symbols then inform other socio-political and economic arenas hence infusing them with new goals and aspirations (Turner, 1970; Sutton-Smith, 1972; Douglas, 1980: 119-120)). Applied to my study, it explains the rupture caused by the bombing that placed not only the survivors, but also the entire country in a liminal state, destroying 'statuses' previously held. A period of great anxiety, suffering and retrospection followed. This paved the way for the emergence of stronger ties between Kenya and the U.S. leading to the formulation of new strategies to combat terrorism.<sup>16</sup> Arguably, what emanated from this tragedy was a country emerging anew with strategies to combat terrorism, a phenomenon that continues defining Kenya's status vis-à-vis neighbouring countries and the whole war on terror. This framework is equally applicable in looking at the survivors and families of the bereaved.

The relevance of this concept to the entire study will become clearer in the subsequent chapters by showing how it accords with my data.

## **Part IV: Conclusion**

In this introductory chapter, I stated the overall purpose of my PhD research, that is, to undertake a systematic study of the 1998 Nairobi terror attack. To enable me to achieve this goal, I provided the historical, geographical and civic information of the city of Nairobi hence placing my study in context. I discussed my personal motivation for undertaking this study: personal experience of the 1998 Nairobi bombing; my work-related responsibility of facilitating the legal protection of monuments associated with Kenya's independence struggle; and discussions of the struggle with MAU MAU War Veterans Association revealing its deep-seated memories. I examined the research methodologies used in assembling the data supporting my key arguments in the study. I also did an extensive review of available literature on the subject of my study beginning with memorialisation in Kenya before looking at other memorialisation processes in Africa, then the rest of the world. I discussed 'collective' memory projects that the Western world has developed as a means of

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<sup>16</sup> See 6.1.5 for counter-terrorism initiatives.

committing to history; and ascribing meaning to some of the worst catastrophes of their time through extensive construction of memorial monuments dedicated to these disasters, especially the World Wars and the Holocaust. The August 7<sup>th</sup> Memorial Park serves a similar purpose by enabling the understanding of not only the memories of the bomb blast but also of how this site of memory has contributed to, and catalysed discussions of, ethnic and national identity in Kenya, an issue that has been very contentious in the recent past. I interrogated such broad conceptual and theoretical frameworks as – collective memory, history, materiality, ethnicity and nationalism, and liminality – that underpin my key concepts of memory, history and identity. This chapter sets out the value of this study that collective acts of memorialisation are important in mediating healing and providing closure emanating from traumatic events such as the 1998 Nairobi terror attack. Memorialisation provides the overall context of this study.

## **Chapter 2: Historical Perspectives to Memorial Monuments in Kenya**

In this chapter, I describe the processes leading to the establishment of the August 7<sup>th</sup> Memorial Park in Nairobi and discuss issues relating to memory arising from it. Part I, ‘The Nairobi terror attack,’ offers a detailed narrative account of the bombing itself by the Liberation Army for the Islamic Sanctuary, a group claiming affiliation to Al Qaeda on the 7<sup>th</sup> August 1998. Its ramifications have been far and wide, it took many lives while injuring many others. Part II, ‘Monuments and memorials: a historical background’ provides the necessary historical background to the development of commemorative monuments in Kenya with a focus on three specific examples: the Nairobi War Memorial; the Kolowa Massacre Memorial and the Nyeri Memorial. Part III, ‘Towards the Establishment of the August 7<sup>th</sup> Memorial Park’ delves into the main focus of the chapter, namely: historical perspective to memorial monuments in Kenya. Part IV, provides a brief summary of what this chapter entails.

### **Part I: The Nairobi Terror Attack**

Prior to the 1998 terror attack targeted at the United States of America Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya prided herself as being an ‘island of peace’ surrounded by countries in turmoil struggling with one form of instability or the other. Sudan to her immediate north west was a country engaged in one of Africa's longest civil wars pitting the Islamic north against the Christian and traditionalist south over control of resources and the latter's quest for independence. Uganda in the west had been engaged in struggles with the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a quasi-religious movement fighting the regime of President Yoweri Museveni. Ethiopia in the north had the ‘still unfinished’ boundary dispute with Eritrea that led them to war in 1998 even with the latter's independence recognised internationally since 1993; and there were other incessant internal strife. To Kenya's northeast was the ungovernable Somalia, a country without any known functional government since the ousting of Siad Barre in 1991 and the resultant inter-clan wars. The wider Great Lakes region extending to Burundi, Rwanda and Congo was also embroiled in one form of war or the other, the 1994 Rwanda

genocide being the single most calamitous event whose effects reverberated across the entire region, Kenya included.

In 1997, Kenya had just come through a tumultuous electioneering period that saw the then incumbent President, Daniel arap Moi,<sup>17</sup> defeat the opposition parties in that year's elections. The country, however, was in a relative state of peace. Though some minor inter-ethnic tensions prevailed, this paled in comparison to the state of instability in the eastern African region at the time.

However, one Friday morning, on the 7<sup>th</sup> of August 1998, the country was awoken from its self-assured state of security by a bomb attack in downtown Nairobi targeted at the United States embassy. Terrorist attacks were so far removed from Kenyan reality that no one imagined the country could be a target. In the minds of many, terrorism was a Middle Eastern affair and the closest it came to them was through television and radio news. The Norfolk Hotel attack in Nairobi in 1980 was many years back and had effectively faded in the memory of many.

Located at the intersection of two of Nairobi's busiest streets, Moi Avenue and Haile Selassie Avenue and next to the Railway station and a busy Nairobi bus terminus, the attack caused extensive damage. The solid and imposing building was in an instant transformed from a *milieu de memoire* - the embassy served in the production of daily memories and meanings, transacting international political, economic and social relations between the U.S and Kenya- into a *lieu de memoire*. It, thus, became a national symbol and a means of memory-making (Nora, 1989; Nelson & Olin, 2003).

In an exclusive report in a local daily newspaper,<sup>18</sup> Joash Okindo, a guard at the embassy, reported that at around 10.30 am, a truck approached the embassy building through its rear entrance but when they stopped the vehicle, a brief argument and confrontation ensued between the 'Arab-looking' men in the truck and the embassy guards. This led to a shoot-out between them before the powerful explosion.

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<sup>17</sup> President Moi hails from the Tugen ethnic community

<sup>18</sup> *East African Standard*, 11.08. 1998.

The impact of the explosion was felt almost a kilometre away from the scene. Half the embassy was completely ripped off, while Ufundi Cooperative building next to the embassy collapsed; buildings within a radius of four hundred metres of the embassy had their windowpanes shattered and in others the walls cracked. The site of the embassy and its adjacent streets were in a state of total chaos.



Fig.2.1: The bombed U.S. embassy building, Nairobi, 1998.  
(Photo: Jacob Otieno).

Writing in the *East African*,<sup>19</sup> John Githongo described this situation as follows:

“An acrid smell filled the air and bewildered Nairobians held handkerchiefs to their noses as they walked about..., within the vicinity of the targeted U.S. embassy, there were small patches of blood mixed with shards of glass. The scene on the Haile Selassie side of the embassy was even more staggering; a huge crater remained where the bomb had gone off and vehicles around the scene had been burned black and twisted into bizarre shapes. Like a scene frozen in time, several buses including two city buses, stood mangled and silent on the avenue... some buses still retained bodies that were terribly mutilated”.

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<sup>19</sup> 10<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup>.08.1998



Many people lost their lives, either buried by the collapsing buildings or burnt in the aftermath of the explosion. Many others died while undergoing treatment. Many bodies remained trapped in both the embassy building and Ufundi Cooperative House. A massive rescue mission to search for any survivors trapped and recover bodies from the rubble was mounted with the Kenyan military forces leading the process but soon joined by the Israeli, French and American rescue missions. In the aftermath of the blast, the American marines stood guard and prevented the now gathered crowds from effecting rescue efforts. Newspaper reports<sup>20</sup> claimed that they only assisted American embassy staff. Their treatment of the dead among the embassy staff smacks of racial discrimination. The American dead were taken to the Lee Funeral Home – a morgue perceived to cater for the elite in the Kenyan society – and other facilities of a similar nature, while the Kenyans were first taken to a warehouse in the Industrial Area before being transferred to the City Mortuary. I mention this aspect of the marines and the treatment of non-American embassy staff here because in Chapter 5, I discuss the *ethnicalised* dimension witnessed during the rescue efforts that renders ironical any such complaints of America's racial discrimination. At the site of the collapsed Ufundi Cooperative House nearby where American marines' intervention was minimal, citizens clambered up the rubble using their bare hands, ropes, stones, pieces of wood and any other thing they could find, to retrieve the bodies of those who were trapped.<sup>21</sup>

Reading these accounts, one might mistakenly conclude that the terror attack only ignited nationalistic feelings against the Americans. However, this was not entirely true. First, immediately after the terror attack and before it became known that it was the American Embassy, which had been hit, many Kenyans assumed this attack to have been a result of a number of local issues within the country. According to Akhaenda (2002), some Kenyans thought that the blast might have occurred at the Cooperative Bank Building, which housed the Teachers Service Commission after the teachers union had called their members to a major strike to pressure government to pay them a 200% salary increase as promised during the previous year's general election. While others thought that the blast might have been caused by the bankers who were then on strike protesting against withdrawal of low interest on their loans.

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<sup>20</sup> *Daily Nation*, 16.08.1998.

<sup>21</sup> *East African*, 10<sup>th</sup> -16<sup>th</sup> .08. 1998.

A third strand, and the most important to my discussion, is that some people thought initially (Akhaenda, 2002) it was the Kikuyu ethnic community that had implemented its pre-election threat to kick the rest of the Kenyan ethnic groups out of Nairobi should a *majimbo*<sup>22</sup> system of government be introduced. Prior to the 1997 elections, a number of Kikuyu Members of Parliament threatened to create a Kirinyaga Kingdom with its headquarters in Nairobi should the *majimbo* system be introduced. Non-Kikuyu feared for their lives. This last aspect brings out the underlying levels of ethnic tensions in Kenyan society.

In their reportage of the rescue effort, the Kenyan media took what has been perceived as an ethnically inclined coverage. Obwogo (1999) convincingly argues that while Kenyans accused the Americans of having displayed racism, no one turned to look into the ethnocentric coverage displayed by the mainstream media. The media picked on two Kikuyu victims, Rose Wanjiku and Sammy Nganga and focussed exclusively on them as the most victimized and portrayed as the paragons of a reckless act of terrorism. Trying to turn Rose into another Princess Diana and referring to her to as “Kenya's candle in the wind” was a pure show of ethnic chauvinism at play as a similar story could have been written about all the victims. The whole notion of ethnicity and national identity will be addressed substantially in Chapter 5.

That said, the terror attack saw Kenyans display a sense of unity that had never previously been witnessed in the country. The heightened inter-ethnic divide and tensions reignited with the introduction of multi-party politics in 1992 seem to have vanished on this day. Nowhere was the sign of unity more evident than at the scene of the blast where every Kenyan who arrived at the scene offered to help. Politicians were equally at the forefront of displaying this unity of purpose. No one could imagine these were the same politicians who had just emerged from an acrimonious election that created a big inter-ethnic divide across the nation. The picture of the President and the opposition party leaders shaking hands, grieving together in their joint press conference at the site, gave Kenyans hope of national unity (Akhaenda, 2002). The sense of unity shown in the first few days after the attack was only transient; as soon as the natural reaction spurred by the attack settled’ Kenyans reverted to looking at subsequent issues using ethnic or religious trajectories.

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<sup>22</sup> A form of federal system of government requiring that each region run its own affairs.

In the aftermath of the attack, 218 people were declared dead, over 5000 injured and property worth billions of Kenyan shillings destroyed. Of the dead were 24 embassy staff, 11 of them American citizens and the rest Kenyans. The bombing remains one of the worst terror attacks to have happened on Kenyan soil, it killed people who were not the primary targets but ordinary Kenyan citizens going about their daily routines who just happened to be at the site when the bombs exploded. Its perpetrators were external, namely, the Al-Qaeda terrorists who claimed this attack and not the enemy of Kenya but the U.S. Kenyans, therefore, saw this as a tragedy visited upon them as a people collectively. “It was an assault on their sovereignty and social peace,” Otenyo & Volker (2005: 101) assert. The bombing directed against the U.S. had happened on Kenyan soil. Kenya, the implication was, was a new modern post-colonial state, part and parcel of the international community, making its contributions and taking sides on political and economic issues at the international level. The choice of Kenya for this act of terrorism, it could be asserted, was due to its perceived connection to a superpower that has belligerently bullied other nations or people in pursuit of its senseless, unbridled economic, political and security pursuits in the World. Sharing military intelligence and cooperating with the U.S. on regional security matters provided the necessary ingredients for an anti-American backlash in Kenya.

In Tanzania, though not the subject of this dissertation, another terrorist bomb targeting the United States of America embassy in Dar es Salaam exploded simultaneously with the one in Nairobi. At exactly 10.39 a.m., an explosive-laden truck drove up the Laibon Road in Dar es Salaam to one of the gates next to the Consulate/Administration complex where the bomber intended forcing his truck through. However, reaching this gate, an embassy water bowser blocked this access forcing the suicide bomber to detonate his charge. The explosion’s impact was devastating; 11 people died while 85 others sustained injuries. The dead were local people working at the embassy. Though the embassy building did not collapse, it suffered major structural damage, as did other buildings within the vicinity.

However, while this was the largest single terror attack in Kenya, it was not the first one in her recent history. Since her independence in 1963, there had been a number of terror attacks in the country, though small in magnitude. Of relevance to this discussion is the 31<sup>st</sup> December 1980 bombing of Norfolk Hotel in Nairobi, at the time owned by the Blocks, a Jewish family. In the aftermath of this attack, carried by Popular Front for the Liberation of

Palestine (PFLP), 16 people died and over 100 others were wounded. It was viewed as a revenge attack for Kenya's assistance to Israel's rescue operation to free hostages from a hijacked Air France plane at Entebbe airport in July 1976. I pick on this particular event because, just like the 1998 U.S. embassy attack, innocent civilians lost their lives, many of them Kenyans working in the hotel.

A discussion of the events of the 1998 Nairobi terror attack would not be complete without mentioning the 28<sup>th</sup> November 2002 Kikambala terrorist attack in Mombasa. Although an unknown group calling itself 'The Government of Universal Palestine in Exile' claimed responsibility, Palestinian officials denied the claim. Evidence, however, points at Al-Ittihad Al-Islami (AIAI), the Somali-based radical Islamic group (Carson, 2005). There are similarities in the ways in which both the Nairobi and Kikambala attacks were executed, the first being the simultaneous nature of the attack and the second, their modus operandi whereby the terrorists attempted to force their way into the buildings in explosives'-loaded trucks (Schaefer, 2006; Mogire & Agade, 2011). The bombing of the Kikambala tourist hotel<sup>23</sup> and the firing of shoulder-launched grenades against an Israeli private jet taking off from Moi International Airport Mombasa, were done at the same time just as in the previous twin attack of the Nairobi and Dar es Salaam United States embassies. Implicit, therefore, is the target having been America but in this case through their Israeli allies. The hotel bombing killed 16 people (11 Kenyans, 3 Israelis and the 3 bombers); again, the majority of those killed were Kenyans. The missiles, however, missed their target and failed to detonate.

The collapse of the Somali government in 1991 and the instability in the Sudan provided a suitable environment through which a terrorism cell, linked to the Al-Qaeda, operated in eastern Africa with minimal detection. The large Islamic community in the region and Kenya's strategic location to the interests of the U.S. in fighting the war on terrorism provided those targeting America with the 'perfect' ground to launch retaliatory attacks; hence the Nairobi terror attack. A renewed spate of terrorism has continued to afflict the region post the 1998 Nairobi terror attack and is discussed in Chapter 6.

In this section, I discussed the security situation prevailing in Kenya and within the wider eastern Africa region prior to the 1998 Nairobi terror attack. I also described the bombing of the U.S. embassy in Nairobi, the damage it caused, the rescue mission in its aftermath and the

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<sup>23</sup> Paradise Hotel in Kikambala was owned by Israeli nationals.

reactions engendered in Kenya. In the next section, I give a historical background to memorial monuments in Kenya focussing on three specific ones, namely: the Nairobi War Memorial, Kolowa Massacre Memorial and the Nyeri Memorial.

## **Part II: Monuments and Memorials – A Historical Background**

No evidence from the recent past suggests that traditional Kenyan communities built monuments to commemorate tragic events, especially where those events culminated in the death of many people. Instead, such commemoration was achieved through the performance of a variety of rituals and ceremonies that ensured that the spirits of the departed were pacified and remembered in their journey into the graded world of the spirits. This journey started at the disposal of the body and continued for up to five generations when the departed were no longer part of living memory and had become the ghosts of unknown persons taking no continuing interest in the lives of the living (Mbiti, 1991).

It is not until after the First World War that we start seeing a new practice of commemoration in built form taking root in the country. The erection of the Nairobi War Memorial in remembrance of the Kings African Rifles' (KAR) Carrier Corps in 1927 was among the first permanent memorials to be dedicated to a collective group.

During the Second World War, the theatre of war extended to eastern Africa. Many casualties were recorded necessitating the need to have them remembered by way of built memorials though not necessarily to Kenyan victims. One such is the construction in 1952 of the Italian War Memorial Church in Nyeri to house the tomb of the Viceroy of Italian East Africa, Amedio di Savoia and vaults containing the bodies of the 676 Italian soldiers captured by the British soldiers between 1940 and 1941 during the fight over control of eastern Africa.

The bodies of Somali soldiers who fought alongside the Italians are interred in a separate vault outside the main church in line with their Islamic faith (Fig.2.3). Unlike other Catholic churches where mass is celebrated every Sunday, in this particular one, a ceremonial remembrance mass for the fallen Italian soldiers is held annually on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November and is attended by families and any remaining friends of the fallen soldiers.



Fig.2.2: Memorial devoted to the memory of Amedeo di Savoia, the Viceroy of Italian East Africa inside the Italian War Memorial Church, Nyeri (Photo: Kipro Lagat, 2012).



Fig.2.3: Memorial to the Muslims fighting on the Italian side. (Photo: Kipro Lagat, 2012)

Besides the World War memorial monuments, there are other memorials devoted to different types of events in Kenya such as those to the independence struggle. Many of these latter ones are found in Central Kenya, the epicentre of the struggle, especially during the

emergency period between 1952 and 1960 (Anderson, 2005). However, there are not many memorials built during the post-independence period in spite of subsequent tragic events potentially necessitating their commemoration.<sup>24</sup> Arising out of political circumstances with a possible involvement of government, those in leadership showed no interest in having them remembered.

In recent years, however, new memorial monuments have been built, one such is the Sachang'wan memorial in Nakuru District, devoted to the memory of all those killed during the 2009 oil tanker fire tragedy burning 130 people beyond recognition. Seventy-eight of the dead were interred in a mass grave in Sachang'wan and a memorial wall built inscribing all the 130 names of the dead.



Fig.2.4: The Sachang'wan memorial, 2010.  
(Photo: Kiprop Lagat).

I chose three memorial monuments in this section, namely: the Nairobi War Memorial, Kolowa Massacre Memorial and the Nyeri Memorial to provide a historical background to memorialization in Kenya because these are some of the earliest built memorial monuments in the country.

<sup>24</sup> The 1969 killings in Kisumu during the opening of the New Nyanza Hospital, the 1<sup>st</sup> August coup of 1982, the Wagalla massacre of 1984, the election-related violence of 1992 in Molo, Likoni and Enoosupukia. At the time of writing, a memorial monument for the victims of the Wagalla massacre was under construction in Wajir town.

### **2.2.1 The Nairobi War Memorial**

The First World War has gone down in the annals of history as one of the greatest military endeavours of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Due to manpower shortages in Europe, as these wars required millions of people, Africans were not spared. In East Africa, for instance, over one million people were forcibly conscripted into the Carrier Corps, a military organization created in Kenya during the First World War to provide military labour to support the British Campaign against the German forces in East Africa between 1914 and 1918 (Killingray, 2001). Its formation was necessitated by the need to feed a large body of foreign soldiers in the interior without road or rail transport. They were also engaged in the military campaigns of 1939 to 1945 fighting against Italians in Somaliland and later used as front line combat troops in Burma against the Japanese in 1942. The mortality rate among the African porters due to disease, malnutrition or neglect was equally high and has been estimated at between 10% and 20% of the total casualties. The Nairobi War Memorial pays tribute to the memory of thousands of African porters-cum-soldiers who died during the First World War and serves as an acknowledgement of the contribution they made towards the war.

In keeping with the trend established in the aftermath of the First World War in continental Europe - of commemorating their dead, the known and the unknown - the colonial powers extended the same idea to their colonies which had provided fighters. In Nairobi, a three-man bronze statue was erected along the now Kenyatta Avenue in 1927. Williams (2007:3) describes the common styles that these World War commemorative monuments in Europe and the colonies generally took stating that, “while they varied in style and splendour, they typically featured one or several sculpted soldier-figures raised on a plinth, onto which a shorter passage is inscribed praising their heroism”. In addition to that, these sculptures were often set within a backing archway or in front of an obelisk on which the names of the ‘nation’s’ battles were inscribed. True to this description, the Nairobi War Memorial has the figurative element raised on a plinth: the carrier man holds a stick in one hand while the two King African Rifle’s riflemen, one African and one Arab side by side, bear rifles.





Fig. 2.5: The Nairobi War Memorial,2011

(Photo: James Waihenya).

Next to this statue is a three-metre high obelisk with the inscription of the 1914 to 1918 War with the following words: “the feet and hands of the army.” It does not, however, contain the names of those who died in the wars, perhaps either because of the magnitude of the numbers involved, or due to the fact that it was a war devoid of any nationalistic heroic deeds as the

Africans were merely fighting a war they knew very little about and beyond their countries of origin; it was not, therefore, a case of self-sacrifice for the sake of the nation-state. Given the level of literacy in Africa at that time, it is obvious that a majority of those recruited were illiterate. Implicit, therefore, is that there are few first-hand written records of their war experiences; their war is largely locked in oral memory. The stories that have been told and retold by many of those who joined the Kings African Rifles revolve around their recruitment, military training and discipline, the exposure to new people, strange lands and new ideas, the battle, the process of demobilization and the final homecoming. The importance of emphasising this perspective is that it contributes to discussions on orality and the functioning of memory, especially on how narratives of history are transmitted in non-literate societies as articulated by Goody and Walter (1968). In my later discussion of



Fig. 2.6: The Nairobi War Memorial obelisk, 2011  
(Photo: James Waihenya)

*postmemory*, especially as it may relate to the August 7<sup>th</sup> Memorial Park, this will serve as an illustration of how these stories are important for those who did not experience the actual events or had not been born. However, they are now witnessing them in the Documentation Centre where there are displays and film shows depicting this event.

While this monument is located within one of Nairobi's busiest streets, to many Kenyans, it evokes no memories, as there is little awareness of what it commemorates. However, during the colonial period, this memorial was used as a site of ritual performances, especially on Remembrance Day, which is observed on the 11<sup>th</sup> November, to recall the end of hostilities of World War I on that date in 1918. The Hull Daily Mail (12<sup>th</sup> November, 1928), for instance, reports that in 1928, “the Prince of Wales headed a gathering, representative of all races in the Kenya Colony, which gathered round the Cenotaph to commemorate Armistice Day.” In the years following Kenya’s independence, it was rarely used to commemorate these activities, a possible indication of its lack of appreciation by the Kenyan public in general. In the more recent past, however, this memorial has been made to function as a part of a network of urban relations in Nairobi, including the events at the Nairobi War Cemetery

hence becoming part of the network of other Commonwealth and World War Grave Memorials in other parts of the world (Benton, 2010; Nelson & Olin, 2003).

### **2.2.2 The Kolowa Massacre Memorial**

Another memorial that will further shed light on how historical narratives and memories are encoded and transmitted is the Pokot Massacre Memorial in Kolowa, Pokot East District. In the early 1930s a political-religious movement, *Dini ya Msambwa*, was formed in the northern parts of western Province. Its leadership and bedrock support was drawn from the Bukusu people under the stewardship of Elijah Masinde. The main tenets of this movement were to agitate for the departure of the white settlers to pave way for the settlement of local people who had been disenfranchised through colonialism. It advocated a return to the way of the ancestors in order to overcome the white man. This movement soon got support from other neighbouring communities – the Nandi, Sabaot, Iteso and Banyala whose lands had similarly been taken away to form part of the white highlands in areas such as Cherangany, Trans Nzioa, Kitale and Nandi Hills. The original occupants were effectively rendered squatters on land that previously belonged to them. An important branch to the *Dini ya Msambwa* is said to have sprung up among the Pokot in the 1940s (Vermouth, 1980). Though its leader did not have any direct communicative links with their headquarters in western Kenya, it is possible that they were influenced by the Bukusu labourers living in their midst. The version of preaching adopted by Lucas Pkech, the leader of the Pokot branch, promised its adherents vitality, increased livestock and freedom from European control. He taught them that they could reclaim their land through singing and prayer because in doing so, they would be filled with the spirit. His songs depicted the white people as the enemy and mainly beseeched God to guide them in their journey towards Zion, a divine earthly abode outside the boundaries of West Pokot, somewhere in Mt Elgon where their livestock would be multiplied.

It was while on pilgrimage to this earthly Zion on the 24<sup>th</sup> of April 1950, in the company of about 300 of his disciples, that Pkech was confronted by the colonial administrators at Kolowa. Their singing was misconstrued to be a mobilization to attack, hence the decision by the colonial administrators to shoot them. According to Kipkorir (1972:114), the aftermath of this confrontation was the killing of Pkech and 33 of his followers while many others were

injured while 48 were arrested, 14 of whom were subsequently hanged. On the government side, four officers were killed: a Mr Alan Stevens who was a local District Officer; George Taylor, the Assistant Superintendent of Police; Robert Cameron, an Assistant Inspector of Police; and an unidentified African tribal policeman. The colonial government commissioned a memorial to be erected at the site with the names of the three white colonial officers inscribed on it but with no record of any of the Pokot men or the man serving in the tribal police. The inscription written on the colonial memorial read 'to those who were killed during the gallant mission'. This reference was exclusively to the colonial officers.

In 2003, a proposal for the erection of a new memorial in memory of all those who were killed during the affray was put forth by a religious sect that regarded Lucas Pkech as their prophet. This was intended to counter the colonial memorial, which the locals had long complained about because of its selective memorialisation. This proposal was positively received by the local government administration, which also set aside land for its construction. The memorial, a triangular shaped concrete structure that is approximately two metres in height, has a cross at its pinnacle with a white dove perched on it. Upon its completion in 2005, a big commemorative event was held at the site. Names and clans of those involved, including the four who had been part of the colonial government were inscribed. In addition, the names of the 14 people hanged after their arrest in 1950 were included. A small booklet titled 'The Pokot Massacre of 1950' was published for the occasion. Again, this had all the names of those who died recorded in it and an objective narrative. A twin brother to Allan Stevens, the local District Officer killed in the affray, travelled from England for the commemoration and his contribution was the carved dove erected on the memorial. The community gave him a tuft of green grass as a gesture of good will. It is noted that a white dove in European context is symbolic of peace while to the Pokot the green grass serves the same purpose. Acknowledgement of the clans of those who were killed signifies the intention to atone the collective loss that was still present in the memory of the community.



Fig. 2.7: The new Kolowa massacre memorial  
(<http://www.kerioview.com/valleykolowa.html>)

### 2.2.3. The Nyeri Memorial

The third of the early memorial monuments to be cited are the Central Kenya memorials to be found in Central Province's district headquarters, specifically created as memorials for the colonial loyalists killed during the emergency period in Kenya between 1952 and 1960. It is worth mentioning that some of the most protracted independence struggles were largely fought in the Central Kenya highland forests around Mt Kenya and the Aberdare ranges. It is in these regions that the colonists also seized large tracts of land from the local population for farming purposes. Discontent over loss of their land to the colonizers eventually led to guerrilla warfare. Though this was a nationalist guerrilla struggle pitting locals against colonialists, the colonial administration also enlisted the support of a few local Africans, to whom they extended favours, often appointing them either as chiefs or 'home-guards' to perpetuate the colonial rule. There was much violence of African against African, with the 'home-guards' becoming a target for the Mau Mau freedom fighters due to their loyalty to the British. Whilst a large number of Mau Mau freedom fighters were killed by the British forces, their African loyalists were equally eliminated. Mazrui and Tidy (1984), quoting the official records, report that during the emergency period (1952-1960) 11,503 Mau Mau fighters were killed; 1,920 Africans loyal to the British; 66 European soldiers; 29 European civilians; and 29 Asian civilians.

In order to commemorate those who fought on the British side, the colonial government representatives in Central Kenya decided to set up a memorial for those who died in the emergency. While the initial idea was to put up headstones on the graves of all those forces that had fought on the colonial side, the Nyeri District Commissioner, M.J. Roberts, felt that a collective memorial would be more useful as most of the individual graves would have been difficult to trace. In addition, the government records might not have been complete and would end up omitting some people; hence the decision to set up a single memorial. This has resonance with World War tombs of the ‘unknown soldier’ where those missing in action were memorialized in a tomb for the ‘unknown soldier’ (Laqueur, 1994). The Treasury was approached for funding, which it provided in the 1956/57 financial year, giving discretion to the District Commissioners in the province to decide on whether to do headstones or erect memorials in their respective districts as long as the budget did not exceed 120 pounds. Other districts within Central Province, such as Nanyuki and Nyandarua, also erected a central memorial in Nanyuki Township and Nyahururu respectively. I will, however, only discuss the Nyeri Memorial monument to give a historical perspective on development of memorials in Kenya and show how the meanings ascribed to the memorials have changed over time.

In Nyeri, the Urban District Council appointed a committee of six consisting of the District Commissioner and the Town Superintendent among others to choose a suitable site for the memorial. A location near the market was selected by the committee; it is at this same site near the old market in Nyeri town where this monument currently stands. In a letter written to the Treasury by Mr Roberts on the 17<sup>th</sup> September 1956, the memorial was described thus: “a fifteen- feet- tall, thick, tapering concrete obelisk set on a pedestal that resembles the war memorials of Europe, something in the nature of ‘Cleopatra’s –needle, in rough stone.’”



Fig.2.8: Nyeri memorial  
(Photo: Kipro Lagat, 2012)

Inscribed on this memorial are the words:

***South Nyeri District***

*In memory of members*

*Of the tribal police force, the Kikuyu guards,*

*Other security forces and all loyal subjects of the queen*

*Who died in the fight against terrorism*

*1951-1957*

Anderson (2005) confirms that this original inscription on the memorial was in honour of the loyalists and soldiers of Nyeri who died in the struggle to defeat the Mau Mau. While this memorial was specifically installed in memory of those who died during the emergency fighting for the colonial government forces, in recent times, the then so-called terrorists have re-appropriated it and assigned it new meaning as a memorial to *their* freedom struggle. The Mau Mau war veterans, therefore, gather here on each Independence Day marked on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December, to commemorate their war. They also gather here again each February 18<sup>th</sup> for

the anniversary of the Dedan Kimathi's execution, one of the icons of the freedom struggle who was executed and buried by the colonialists without any trace to date.<sup>25</sup>

In presenting the Mau Mau narrative, (Ogot 1975; Anderson 2005; Branch 2009) point out that the role of the 'loyalists' in the struggle is more complex than the simplistic interpretation previously offered by some historians, political scientists and writers of memoirs. Because of the rapid impact of colonialism in central Kenya, the political leadership devised various ways to manage the social impact it engendered. Anderson (2005:13) identifies three political blocks that emerged in their response to the colonial state: the conservatives, mainly represented by chiefs, headmen and Christian elders who associated with the colonists in their pursuit of land, wealth and power. They became the gatekeepers of the colonial state and used its instruments to wield power. Moderate nationalists emerged from the first batch of educated "mission boys" who also had a desire for material gains and sought to displace the conservatives from political leadership. Anderson (ibid) suggests, that just like the conservatives, this group was equally interested in personal wealth and power. A third category consisted of the militant nationalists which emerged in the 1930s and whose brand of politics would give shape to the emergence of the Mau Mau in the 1950s. "Their strategy was to mobilize cultural nationalism in defence of the interests of those being excluded by the social and economic changes within the Kikuyu society" (ibid: 12). Having adopted different strategies, those that favoured cooperation have been referred to as the "loyalists" while those adopting militancy, the "freedom fighters." Branch (2009) notes that the "loyalists" and the "freedom fighters" often came from the same families, clans and ethnic communities and were, therefore, generally agreed on the objectives of the latter group: to achieve political freedom and to reform the oppressive British land policies that had driven them out of their ancestral lands in the highlands of central Kenya. While the "freedom fighters" advocated the use of violence, the "loyalists" supported the colonial government with a view to suppress the violence of the Mau Mau so that practical reforms could be achieved in an atmosphere of order and stability. Against this view, Ogot (1972:16) suggests that "loyalism" was partly a revolt of the elders who abhorred the activities of the young people, which they regarded as a violation of their traditions and customs but not necessarily for their loyalty to the government. He gives the example of the

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<sup>25</sup> A public memorial statue to the memory of Dedan Kimathi was unveiled by President Mwai Kibaki on 18<sup>th</sup> February 2007, on a street named after him, Kimathi Street, in Nairobi.



Njuri Ncheke<sup>26</sup> which opposed the violence that had come to characterise the Mau Mau, especially that directed against women and children. To the Njuri Ncheke, the Mau Mau symbolised lawlessness and chaos and, therefore, felt it their duty to suppress it.

The benefits accruing from “loyalism”, such as land and wealth, enhanced the loyalists’ social standing earning them the right to speak on behalf of the community. This notion, Branch (2009) argues, was rooted in Kikuyu cultural conceptions of “self-mastery”, the idea that an individual’s ability to harness the productive power of the household was a measure of virtue and leadership. Since the Mau Mau rebels did not believe in this principle, those who believed in social order often regarded them as idlers and rebels. Eventually, “loyalism” became a safer and more attractive position for the Kikuyu and it continued to gain momentum until its triumph over the Mau Mau in 1956. As the British colonialists prepared for Kenya’s independence, the loyalists assumed position of power and became the chief architects of Kenya’s post-colonial state. It is, thus, arguable that Kenya’s independence was achieved through the adoption of different strategies that involved both the “loyalists” and the Mau Mau “freedom fighters.”

Considering that both groups fought for independence, albeit using different strategies, it is understandable that the Mau Mau “freedom fighters” could stake a claim to the Nyeri Memorial by re-appropriating and assigning it new meaning as a memorial to *their* freedom struggle. This does not invalidate the original reasons for its creation: as a memorial to those who fought on the government site. In my view, it is one of the memorial monuments symbolizing Kenya’s struggle for independence.

#### **2.2.4. Conclusion**

In concluding this section on the history of the early memorial monuments in Kenya, I have brought up issues that are pertinent to my wider dissertation. Among these are the re-interpretation of history, the politics of power and how these accord or conflict with issues of ethnicity, national identity, and their implications for the generation and transmission of memory.

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<sup>26</sup> The Meru Council of Elders.

The Nairobi War Memorial and the anonymity of the dead of the First World War it commemorates, led me to discuss how racial identity is a factor in the process of memorialization in Kenya. The exclusion of Africans in commemorative events at the Nairobi War Cemetery, the non-mention of the Pokot dead in the Kolowa Massacre Memorial and the actions of American Marines during the rescue mission after the 1998 bomb blast supports this observation. Conversely, coverage in the Kenyan newspapers took a parallel approach and ignored the American dead, nor did they feature in the national remembrance prayers (Obwogo, 1999). The third anniversary of the terror attack saw parallel commemorations being held: one at the American Embassy and the other at the Memorial Park - arguably, a further proof of the segregation on racial lines. This racial perspective will also give us a window by which to discuss the Arab and Islamic connection, especially in regard to the appropriation of an Islamic identity in the perpetration of this terror.

The ironical presence of a monument in praise of the valour of the Colonial Officers killed during the Kolowa affray constantly pricked the memories of the Pokot, reminding them of the massacre visited upon their people while on a religious mission. This biased representation of the massacre necessitated the construction of a new memorial monument that rectified the selective memorialisation. It was the report of the community research team that made it possible to gather an objective narrative of what transpired in the 1950, hence the corrective memorial that inscribes the names of all the dead in the aftermath of the massacre, including the officers. The booklet containing the names and their inscription on the monument itself was intended to provide closure to this massacre. While the Colonial government praised the action of their officers without any mention of the local community, this may be interpreted to have been in line with the colonists' intention to obfuscate and quietly forget this part of history, completely concealing the reasons behind the confrontation. This selective portrayal of the history of the massacre accords with Connerton's (1983) view that monuments encode selected memories and historical narratives.

Unlike this scenario, the Nyeri Memorial gives us a different perspective of memory. Here the Mau Mau War Veterans Association has appropriated and ascribed new meanings to a monument. Their actions demonstrate a move towards the endorsement of certain collective liberation memories that justify the independence struggle and consign the role of the

loyalists, whose contribution to the colonizers' was perceived to be more selfish and individualistic, to the periphery of nationalist narrative. Whilst this is the dominant view among the Mau Mau war veterans, other historians such as Ogot (1972) and Anderson (2005) have persuasively argued that "loyalism" was an approach chosen by those who abhorred the violence of the "freedom fighters." They, however, shared in the objective to reclaim their land from the colonists and for political freedom. This memorial could therefore be revised to incorporate the "freedom fighters" as their intentions converged on attainment of independence.

By the Association having its annual Dedan Kimathi commemorative ceremonies at the monument, I argue, they intend to win deserved sympathy and recognition on the part of government for the role they played in the struggle for independence in Kenya. However, the role and contributions of other Kenyans must not be forgotten. For many Kenyans, and more so, for the Kikuyu, the Dedan Kimathi arrest and execution provides the foundational myth for the establishment of the nation-state. It is for this reason that on ascendancy to the presidency in Kenya, the Kibaki government formally removed the ban on the Mau Mau movement and started an elaborate process towards recognition of their heroes through public sculptures and mausoleums. A Dedan Kimathi sculpture was erected in the last year of the first term of the Kibaki presidency on the 18<sup>th</sup> February 2007 along Kimathi Street to further reinforce in our memory his contributions to the independence war.



Fig. 2.9: Dedan Kimathi's sculpture on Kimathi Street, Nairobi.  
(Photo: NMK, 2013)

This sculpture is a full-life-size, six-foot high statue, (Kimathi was approximately 6 feet tall) embedded on a nine-foot plinth base. The sculpture is cast out of molten bronze showing Kimathi draped in Mau Mau dreadlocks and bearing a homemade gun. Being Kikuyu, this may have been a well-calculated move towards his community's legitimation to power; his controversial holding on to power in the aftermath of defeat in the 2007/8 elections in Kenya is enough proof of this claim. Mutahi Ngunyi (2007), a Kenyan political analyst predicted correctly in early 2007 that Kibaki would decline to hand over power if defeated during that year's elections, instead clinging to the reins of power at all costs, even if it meant plunging the country into chaos. The post-election violence witnessed in Kenya after the 2007 elections proved Ngunyi's predictions. Ngunyi alleges that Kibaki chaired meetings of his inner-circle advisors consisting only of the Kikuyu where elaborate plans were developed for the retention of the presidency in the 'House of Mumbi'<sup>27</sup> beyond 2022. In the new constitution unveiled in 2010, a Heroes Day to be celebrated every 20<sup>th</sup> of October is

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<sup>27</sup> Kikuyu legend has it that they all descended from the nine daughters of Gikuyu and Mumbi.

recognized. During the first Heroes Day commemorations of 2010, the President ordered for the expedient establishment of a National Heroes Corner.

The following section describes and discusses the processes in the establishment and inauguration of the August 7<sup>th</sup> Memorial Park in Nairobi interpreting the key elements in the Park, namely, the memorial fountain, the memorial wall of names, indigenous trees and the sculpture 'Mind, Body and Spirit'.

## **Part III: Towards the Establishment of the August 7<sup>th</sup> Memorial Park and Documentation Centre**

### **2.3.1. Towards the Inscription of the Memories**

The need to build a monument as a permanent tribute to commemorate those who lost their lives in the Nairobi terror attack started to take root in the first few weeks after the tragic event. Similar discussions ensued in the United States after the September 11 2001. Soon after the traumatic shock of the bombing of the twin-towers in downtown Manhattan, discussions on how to set up a permanent memorial to the tragic loss of life that traumatized New York had already started. In these discussions, what stood out was the importance of such a memorial as the terror attack was a major event that marked a turning point in World History. The challenge as Huyssen (2003) points out was on ‘... how to represent and memorialize traumatic events in built space, especially if the space is a death zone in living memory’. The challenges alluded to must also have been at the centre of the deliberations of the August 7<sup>th</sup> Memorial Trustees on the importance of setting up a Memorial Park. What did they expect it to achieve, given the similarity in nature though difference in magnitude?

Among the very first efforts towards capturing the memory of the Nairobi terror attack was in the work of three artists, Rene Klarenbeek, Patrick Mukabi, and Thom Ogonga, a Dutch visiting artist and Kuona Trust-based Kenyan artists respectively, in their Daily Billboard project. What they did was to erect a large canvass along Aga Khan Walk, a busy walkway in central Nairobi, to solicit comments from members of the public on a wide range of issues touching directly on society based on what had appeared in the newspaper headlines. At the end of the day, the artists recorded these comments and painted a new screen over the previous one to await the next day's comments. While their project had started on the 1<sup>st</sup> August 1998, a few days before the bomb attack, its occurrence diverted their focus to documenting the thoughts and feelings of ‘Nairobians’ - indeed any passer-by - towards the attack. It occupied the newspaper headlines for over three weeks giving the artists a platform to record the raw feelings as felt by Kenyans on ‘black Friday’ and in the days that followed including those relating to the retaliatory attack initiated by the United States government in Sudan and Afghanistan.

During this period, about 1400 people wrote down their thoughts and feelings on pieces of paper provided and had them posted on the billboard, making it the first work of inscription regarding this terror attack. One Peter Ngugi, for instance, in a statement had the following to say:

“It was as if the world was on a run, I thought for a minute. I ran, I walked, I stopped, I smoked. No! A cloud of death, No! The devil was in control, then, I said a prayer. A memory I will hold forever.”

Maina Wanjigi’s posting read:

“I was walking towards KENCOM to catch a bus and somewhere along Aga Khan Walk, I suddenly heard a big blast, got tossed upwards but on getting to my feet, I ran towards nowhere. It was after a few hours that I regained my sense and went towards the railways where I could see a big cloud of dust. The site there was like a scene from a horror movie. I will, forever, live to remember how lucky I was to have survived”.

One Jane Vihenda had this to write,

“Is the God we worship the same one with that of the Muslims? I doubt it! No caring God can allow the killing of innocent people.”

Since at this stage I consider the processes leading to the establishment of the Memorial Park, I limit myself to characterizing the many postings in the following headlines: Bravery and heroism; Innocence of victims; Dying for the war of others; Blame the Americans; Islamic intolerance; Disaster; and Triumph over evil.<sup>28</sup>

A more detailed analysis of these inscriptions is offered in chapter three where I compare what was inscribed then with what is being said now. In the Documentation Centre, visitors are provided with paper and encouraged to write their experiences pertaining to the visit. In my research, I analyse the comments inscribed in the Klarenbeek-Thom-Mukabi billboard and those in the Documentation Centre to establish how time shapes memory.

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<sup>28</sup> This work has not been published but was exhibited at the Nairobi National Museum in October 1998

In a memorial and prayer service two weeks after the terror attack, President Daniel arap Moi, who was in attendance, stated that the 7<sup>th</sup> August, 1998 had left an indelible mark and would remain one of the darkest days in Kenya's history. He expressed the government's wish to have a monument of remembrance built near the site of the terror attack. In making this statement, the President seemed to be responding to similar calls made during other memorial services held in the weeks following the attack.<sup>29</sup> August is regarded in Kenya as an unlucky and tragic month as most catastrophes have occurred during the month. The mention by the President that this would remain one of the darkest days in Kenya's history must have jogged the memories of previous calamities occurring in August, a notion that is embedded in the collective psyche of the nation.<sup>30</sup>

The need for a memorial monument dedicated to this tragedy seems to have been in the interest of many of those affected, including the American Ambassador, Ms Prudence Bushnell, who promised to consult her government regarding the request by Martin Barnard<sup>31</sup> to donate the plot of the former U.S. embassy building for a Memorial Park. In a remembrance and recognition ceremony held at her residence on the 21<sup>st</sup> January 1999, she dedicated a small remembrance garden to the American embassy staff that lost their lives in the terror attack. The memorial consisted of a fountain built of bricks, each of which was inscribed with the name of a victim who had died in the American embassy building (Bushnell 2000). This memorial was, however, only dedicated to the staff who worked at the American Embassy. According to Bushnell, this ceremony “was a symbol that I had gathered back the community that exploded on August 7<sup>th</sup>.” It was a ritual of healing that was attended by bereaved family members, some of whom had travelled all the way from the U.S.

The quest for a memorial dedicated to all the victims remained undone. The U.S. embassy function above and the personal initiative of Martin Barnard, among other events, could have given urgency to the donation of the plot of its former embassy location to the Kenyan

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<sup>29</sup> *East African Standard*, 21.08.1998.

<sup>30</sup> The death of founding President Mzee Jomo Kenyatta in 1978, the attempted coup of 1982, Bishop Muge's and Masinde Muliro's deaths in 1990 and 1992 respectively, Ngai Ndethya train disaster in 1993, the demise of Vice President Michael Wamalwa in 2003 and the 2013 fire tragedy that gutted the arrivals terminal at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport.

<sup>31</sup> A Kenyan resident of British descent, engineer and director of Humphrey Howards engineering firm, who besides proposing the idea of a memorial park, was instrumental in identifying people from the private sector that would raise funds for its implementation. He was the advisor to the trustees throughout the implementation period.



government, for the sake of an all-inclusive memorial, once it was cleared of the rubble. This enabled the government to set up a committee to implement its previous intent of a memorial monument to the tragedy. The presence of an empty space in a site associated with death reminds the mourning that their beloved ones are no longer physically present. The construction of the Memorial Park and the Documentation Centre in the former location of the U.S. embassy and the Ufundi Cooperative House minimizes the negative impact of stigma attached to the empty plots. The East African Standard (13.07.2000) reports that as soon as the plot was handed over, the government appointed a board of trustees headed by Justice Richard Kwach, an appellate judge, to oversee its development.<sup>32</sup> This team, constituted of professionals mainly drawn from the private sector, immediately embarked on seeking legal constitution through the registration of the August 7<sup>th</sup> Memorial Park Trust as a charitable organization. The trust's immediate task was to initiate fundraising activities to support the planned Memorial Park and its activities, an endeavour that succeeded as they soon received generous donations from institutions and individuals. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) donated about three quarters of the funding required, while the rest came from Kenyan and Kenyan-based institutions. During the ground-breaking ceremony for the Memorial Park, the President also conducted an impromptu fundraising towards the memorial. The Documentation Centre was, however, built later from another grant from USAID on the recommendation of the Ambassador, while the Ford Foundation, an American institution, offered a ten-year grant to the trust for the park's maintenance (Driscoll, 2001).

With almost all the funding in place, the trustees embarked on meetings to thrash out the modalities for implementing their mandate and ensuring that this was delivered within a period of 18 months. Melanie Richards and George Kagiri, a designer and architect respectively were approached by the trustees and requested to develop the conceptual designs. Once the trustees adopted the proposed designs, the contract for its implementation was awarded to Lalji Meghji Construction Limited after a competitive bidding process overseen by the trustees.

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<sup>32</sup> The other trustees were: Bill Lay, chairman Coopers Motors Corporation; Hosea Kiplagat, chairman Cooperative Bank of Kenya; Dr Nazim Mitha, a United Nations Children's Education Fund (UNICEF) specialist; Dr. Sally Kosgey, Head of the Public Service; Chris Kirubi, a city business mogul and chairman of the American Business Association; Janet Angira, a lawyer representing Mathews and Harrison law firm that was already working with the U.S. Embassy; and George Kagiri, a Nairobi-based architect.



Fig.2.10: Preliminary designs for the August 7<sup>th</sup> Memorial Park.  
Developed by Melanie Richards.

It was held that this design would give the Memorial Park the sombre and reflective mood the trustees had envisaged. This design incorporated elements of uniqueness and memorability, and it contained some metaphorical visual symbolism in accordance with what has come to appear as the standard qualities that such a memorial must espouse (Williams, 2007). “It is established to serve as a memorial to the innocent people who lost their lives as a result of the 1998 bombing and become a garden of solace, offering comfort, strength and hope in an environment of relative peace and serenity both to the victims’ families, those who survived and also the general public or those directly affected by the tragedy. The Park pays tribute to the courage of those who have coped with injuries sustained and or the loss of a loved one while condemning acts of terrorism. Its presence makes a statement of the futility of terrorism and endurance of the virtues of humanity.”

In this part of the thesis, I describe four key elements, which stand out in the Memorial Park as representing what the trustees had wanted the Memorial Park to contain. They entail the memorial fountain, the memorial wall of names, the sculpture, and the indigenous trees in a well-landscaped garden.

### 2.3.2. The Memorial Fountain

The centrepiece of the park is a fountain whose design is derived from the Chinese philosophy of *taiji* and contains diagrams of *taijitu*, which literally translates as the Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate. According to accepted traditions, a standard *taijitu* diagram should be circular with two fishes, the Yin and Yang embracing each other (Gu, 2003). In their philosophy, *taiji* as a concept explains the self-generating nature of the universe. It describes how polar or seemingly polarized forces are interconnected and interdependent in the natural world and how they give rise to each other in turn. These two complementary opposites, the Yin and the Yang, have an endless series of associations, notably light and darkness, the known and the unknown, among many others.



Fig.2.11: The memorial fountain, 2010.  
(Photo: Kiprof Lagat).

Its centrality in the Memorial Park symbolically represents the continuity of life after death, and bad deeds followed by good deeds. In this respect therefore, there is resonance with the tenets of the African Traditional Religion's belief in life after death as advanced by Mbiti (1991). Though many died during the bomb blast, that did not signify the end of life, as life is in itself a self-generating process and death is best understood as a necessary step towards the next life. In interviews conducted during my first fieldwork in August 2010, about 15% of those interviewed mentioned the water fountain being the most interesting thing in the Memorial Park. While they did not understand the philosophical concept behind it, they,

nevertheless, connected well with the water symbolism it represented. As in many of their cultures, flowing water symbolizes purity and life.

### 2.3.3. The Memorial Wall of Names

Adjacent to the memorial fountain stands a six-metre-long by two-metre-high concrete wall, with black granite marble in which 218 names of all those who died in the terror attack are inscribed.



Fig. 2.12: The memorial wall, 2010.  
(Photo: Kiprop Lagat).

Inscription of names just as naming is an age-old way of remembering the dead and helping the living come to term with bereavement. Mack (2003) notes that in ancient Egypt, for instance, the act of inscribing names in a written form so they could always be read aloud and thereby repeated ensured that the names (and by implication the person commemorated) endured for eternity. In Freudian analysis, as elaborated in his essay of 1917 on 'Mourning and Melancholia' (Freud, 1950), two types of reactions to loss occasioned by death are envisioned; some people accommodate bereavement; others are devastated by it. The latter he terms 'melancholic', an inability to come to terms; while the former he calls 'non-melancholic', the ability to more easily disengage from the loss. Mediating agencies like a memorial, assist the former group go through the mourning process and to accept the loss. Inscription of names in a memorial becomes the mediating agency that helps the melancholic

accept; and this they can achieve by either touching the names or by merely reading them (Winter, 1995: 115; Benton, 2010). Observations I made at August 7<sup>th</sup> Memorial Park, especially during the 12<sup>th</sup> commemorative anniversary showed people coming either individually, in a group or with family and friends and heading directly to the wall to point to the names of those whom they knew. Having names of loved ones or colleagues has, thus, acknowledged and given some form of closure to this tragedy to some people, the 'melancholic', to use Freud's words. The wall provides a space of mourning that is personal, familial as well as social.

The Maya Lin Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington DC, built in 1982 is the other memorial that utilizes this form of inscription of names on a black granite wall to locate the dead of Vietnam in American history and reality. Lin describes her design as “a rift in the earth...a long, polished black stone wall, emerging from and receding into the earth”. She asserts that the mass of names and scale it encompasses is intended to aid an individual in his/her journey of self-reflection and private reckoning leading towards a destination that makes one come to term with the loss. It has become a site of pilgrimage to many individuals and families (Leigh, 2000; Winter, 1995).



Fig. 2.13: Maya Lin's Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington DC.  
(Photo: Kiprop Lagat: 2013).

Other memorials in the Mall, America's national commemoration ground, in Washington DC, are vertically imposing, valedictory and intended to glorify the wars' shared national ideals of common denial and self-sacrifice. Maya Lin's structure, by contrast, is horizontal, a non-obtrusive monument embedded into the ground as if in communion with mother earth. Its portrayal as something cut into the earth is reminiscent of the counter-monuments established by the German anti-monument movement, which challenge the ethics and aesthetics of the very notion of building an artifice to represent violence that led to the extermination of many lives.

The simplicity of design in Maya Lin's monument is widely praised as having achieved its desired effect of offering individuals with a contemplative site, one suitable for healing without taking the assertive form of those criticised by the anti-monuments movement (Leigh 2000). The wall of names in the August 7th Memorial Park seems to have borrowed from the concepts utilized in Lin's memorial. Its simplicity and appearance as 'a wall emergent from the ground' are things that I emphasise: in offering a contemplative space, they provide healing to their visitors without diminishing the memories of the terror attack.

#### **2.3.4. Indigenous Trees**

Another feature of the Memorial Park are the indigenous trees and plants brought from each of Kenya's former eight provinces. Traditionally, many Kenyan ethnic communities did not build monuments to remember a tragic event; instead they planted sacred plants and trees to symbolize hope and rebirth; others selected sites where these trees already grow for the performance of rituals to appease the spirits. The decision by the trustees to include sacred plants in the park has borrowed from traditional practices amongst Kenyan communities such as the Kikuyu, Maasai, Bukusu, the Luo and the Kalenjin where such plants occupy an important place in ritual performance. In his unpublished report on 'Peace and Sacred Trees', Owuor (2000) posits that these trees were selected because they provided good shade, are always evergreen or yielded a milky sap which was considered to be of good omen. Trees planted at the Memorial Park and utilized for ritual and ceremonial purposes of various types include the fig tree (*figus natalensis*) which is referred to as *simotwe* by the Kalenjin, *ngow* by the Luo and *khumukuyu* by Bukusu and is central in supplication rituals. Other tree species in the park is the African olive (*olea chrysohylla*) which is used by the Kalenjin to erect an

altar for ceremonial rituals while to the Maasai it is used to light ceremonial fire and in peace-making ceremonies.

I believe that the decision to highlight the former provinces was for the purpose of making the Memorial Park communicate its identity and national remit in securing the memories of the terror attack. While the attack claimed victims from all of Kenya's eight provinces, some provinces like Central suffered higher casualties because their population in Nairobi is higher than that of the other Kenyan communities. This has, however, not negatively influenced the Memorial Park's role as a national monument. The tragedy was generally viewed as an attack on Kenyans as a people. This aspect appropriately positions the park to run programmes on conflict mediation without being seen to be partisan. A 'Peace Builder's Kids Club' with a national outreach programme already operates at the site.

### **2.3.5. The Sculpture: 'Mind, Body and Spirit'**

In one corner of the Park is a triangular-shaped sculpture titled ' Mind, Body and Spirit' made out of debris and containing construction materials collected from the embassy building - pipes, plastics, electric wires, and metal rods. Mary Collis, a second-generation Kenyan born artist with American roots was commissioned by the trustees to do an art piece for installation in the Park on the recommendation of Martin Barnard.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> See footnote 31 above.



Fig.2.14: 'Mind Body and Spirit' sculpture by Mary Collis.  
(Photo: Kiprop Lagat, 2011).

The use of the partially-twisted and burnt debris from the bombed embassy building in the sculpture is intended to confirm the force of the bombing to anyone who might in future fail to recognize it. This is applicable in *postmemory* since later generations are more likely to acknowledge its psychological and physical impact when confronted with its artful materiality. The sculpture as an artefact enables visitors to get a deeper understanding of the effects of the terror attack on built landscape.

In the trustees' discussions about the Documentation Centre, one of its envisaged roles was to host works of Kenyan artists whose lives were affected by the blast. Mary Collis was assigned the task of vetting the Kenyan artists' contributions to be represented in the centre. It could be argued that the selection of a Kenyan-American artist to do the sculpture, together with her envisaged role in the selection of Kenyan artists work for the Documentation Centre, was calculated to ensure that the memories evoked in visual form do not dwell on the biased treatment of non-Americans during the recovery period. Managing visual representations in this way ensured that the Americans could manipulate the memories created and transmitted through such artworks.



### 2.3.6. The Inauguration

The trustees besides supervising the development of the Memorial Park and ensuring its completion on time also had the responsibility for organizing its timely inauguration on the 7<sup>th</sup> of August 2001 coinciding with the third anniversary of the terror attack. The then-President of Kenya, Daniel arap Moi officially inaugurated the park while the American Ambassador, Prudence Bushnell, and Kenya's Minister for Trade, Hon. Joseph Kamotho, planted trees during the ceremony. The symbolism of having the two plant trees signified the value of life to both parties. At the time of the blast, both the Ambassador and the Minister were in a meeting in the latter's office located in the Cooperative Bank building but both managed to come out of it alive, albeit with some minor injuries. It may also be interpreted to have been intended to give a new impetus to the bilateral relations between the two countries, which had been shaken by the terror attack.

The official inauguration ceremony started at 10.a.m with the singing of the national anthem by the Kenyan army followed with speeches by the American Ambassador and the Trust's chairman. A minute of silence was observed in remembrance of the dead and, thereafter, doves and balloons were released to the air. The climax of the ceremony was the President's speech and the unveiling of the memorial monument. Earlier in the morning, members of the bereaved families had conducted prayers at the All Saints Cathedral before holding a procession to the Memorial Park. These members were not to enter the park during the official ceremony but had been asked to keep vigil outside.

The plaque unveiled had the following words:

*“May the innocent victims of this tragic event rest in the knowledge that it has strengthened our resolve to work for a world in which man is able to live alongside his brother in peace.”*<sup>34</sup>

The unveiling ceremony, whilst sombre in nature, contained all the necessary elements that have come to characterize many memorialization ceremonies. Its key ingredients consist of a procession, the expression of grief for the loss of loved ones, indebtedness and either personal

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<sup>34</sup> While the use of the words ‘man’ and ‘brother’ in this sentence is highly gendered, I am unaware of any serious comments it has generated regarding the exclusion of women. It is, however, my understanding that this could have been derived from an Old English construct in which ‘man’ means ‘person’. In this context, the word ‘brother’ could have also been used in a blanket way to cover both genders.

or group commitment to remember the dead by continuing the good work they did while alive, and a declaration of support for the bereaved families.

I draw out the following observations arising from this Memorial Park inauguration ceremony. Having the President officiate at the event imbued the memorial with the collective memory of the nation as he symbolizes the national collective. Secondly, while this was a monument to the memory of those who lost their lives and their descendants, the tragedy had repercussions across the nation, as it did not select the ethnicity of the victims. By playing the national anthem, 'nationalistic' implications of the values of peace, love and unity are highlighted. In conclusion, and borrowing from De Jong and Rowlands (2007), this ceremony presented the state with a stage to reinvent and frame its myth of national identity.

### **2.3.7. The Documentation Centre**

Following the completion and inauguration of the Memorial Park, the trustees embarked on work towards the establishment of a documentation centre to be located next to the Memorial Park at the site where Ufundi Cooperative House stood before the terror attack. Funding for the project was mobilized by the trustees through fund-raising initiatives, with the USAID and the Ford Foundation making significant contributions. As mentioned, the latter committed to fund the operations of the Centre for a ten-year period.

During the ground-breaking ceremony presided over by the Nairobi Mayor, he formally announced the commencement of a seven-million Kenyan shillings construction project to build a Documentation Centre. The objectives of the centre as set out by the trustees were to assist in providing visitors to the Park with an in-depth understanding of the scale of the tragedy that befell Nairobi on that fateful day, and through its displays, make a statement condemning the act of terror itself. This was, however, later revised and given an expanded role of, not only condemning acts of terror and promoting bilateral relations between Kenya and the United States, but also included propagating an amicable approach towards the resolution of conflict at the regional and international levels. The trustees, however, agreed to move forward with the first component of the Documentation Centre and deferred the conflict research and resolution phase to a later time.

The trustees further saw the Centre providing a focal meeting point and venue to the various survivor groups and their members. It is worth mentioning that six survivor-groups were independently formed based on how the bombing affected them. I will not go into the details of these groups for now, as they will be dealt with in chapter four. However, it may suffice to mention that there were, and still are, groups that were blinded, crippled, widowed, orphaned, or economically deprived through loss of business, among others offering support to their members in helping them cope with the bombing tragedy. By forming such affliction-specific groups is reflective of the different sorts of memories that are associated with the site. To these groups, the Memorial Park and Documentation Centre rekindles different types of memories that transcend the individual/collective divide. The membership to these groups is not ethnically inclined because what they commonly share is the nature of injuries sustained, hence the possibility to address their challenges with understanding.

Since its establishment in 2001, the Memorial Park has become one of the social landmarks in the City of Nairobi. It is a quiet and serene corner that provides its visitors with a chance to learn more about the tragedy and to reflect on it while remembering the tragic events of that fateful day on the 7<sup>th</sup> of August 1998. It conjures up individual and collective memories as each person has a way of remembering what happened, being in a group facilitates the collective memories engendered in the Park's conception.

## **Part IV: Conclusion**

This chapter provided a preliminary description of the detail whose significance and implications are explored in depth in the body of the thesis, together with an indication of its general theoretical setting. It examined the historical background to the development of memorial monuments in Kenya, picking out a representative sample starting with the Nairobi War Memorial to the August 7th Memorial Park. It, thereafter, presented the process leading to the establishment of the Memorial Park and highlighting the issues that have bearing on the subject of memory dealt with more substantively in the subsequent chapters. Those foreshadowed here include the entwined relation between memory and history, individual and collective memory, appropriation and re-inscription of monuments and the dichotomy between ethnic and national identity.

## Chapter 3: The August 7<sup>th</sup> Memorial Park: Memories and Commemorations

### 3.0. Introduction

This chapter builds on the materials described in chapter two by analysing a series of visual and commemorative rituals associated with the August 7<sup>th</sup> Memorial Park to demonstrate their contribution in providing closure to the trauma experienced by the survivors and the victims' families. The chapter is divided into two parts: Part I, Heritageization of Memory and; Part II, Commemorations. The first part mainly focuses on the creation and transmission of the bomb blast memories while in part II the commemorative events discussed aims at providing healing and closure to the trauma engendered by the Nairobi terror attack.

In Part I, I discuss the processes by which the memories of the Nairobi terror attack were created, in what I refer to as *heritageization* of memory. This part begins with a description of what constitutes 'grassroots' or 'spontaneous' memorials, referring to: temporary memorials created on impulse by either individuals or a group of people to mark sites of untimely death. This section then proceeds to discuss two exhibitions, the 'Daily Bill Board' and, 'The Bomb Terror' curated at the Nairobi Museum and Goethe Institute respectively. The former documents expressions of grief in A-4 flipcharts from a diversity of people on what they thought of the Nairobi terror attack, while the latter is based on the varied ways the bombing was experienced by the artists.

The exhibition in the Documentation Centre of the August 7<sup>th</sup> Memorial Park is also presented in this part; this exhibition tells the story of the bombing and its aftermath in five sections using a mix of media and styles: written texts, photographs, artefacts and video documentaries. It is the only museum and archive dedicated to this bombing tragedy. The last section of Part I, explores the construction and transmission of the bomb blast memories by comparing messages inscribed in the Daily Billboard in 1998 with the testimonials registered in the Documentation Centre with a view to examining how memory is shaped through time. The three exhibitions discussed in this chapter: the Daily Billboard, the Bomb Terror, and the one in the Documentation Centre are perhaps the only public exhibitions that were curated in response to the Nairobi terror attack hence their inclusion in this study.

The second part of this chapter, Commemorations, focuses on the commemorative events held in memory of the victims of the Nairobi terror attack. The first section of this part offers a description of the events marking the thirteenth anniversary of the bombing and the role these activities play in mediating the trauma experienced. Other than this official public annual commemorative event dedicated to all the victims, the last section of this part discusses how one family in Maragwa safeguards and transmit the memory of their son, who was a victim of the same bombing, in a ‘family memorialisation’. Lastly, a comparative analysis of the national commemorative events held at the August 7<sup>th</sup> Memorial Park and the ‘family memorialisation’ in Maragwa are discussed. Finally, a brief discussion of new ways of commemorating besides these two is presented. Part III, ‘Conclusion’, summarises the main arguments, comparisons and the observations drawn in this chapter.

## **Part I: Heritageization of Memory**

In 2002, the National Museums of Kenya requested me to join a team of researchers working on a collaborative project between Meru Museum, Kenya and Bohuslans Museum, Sweden. The research sought to investigate how museums in both countries handled ‘sensitive and emotional things’ in their collecting programmes. While Meru Museum chose Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) as its focus, Bohuslans Museum’s theme was the spontaneous roadside memorials set up by family and friends for victims of fatal road accidents. In Sweden, we researched in the VstraGotaland region documenting the materials placed in such memorials and interviewed family members and friends on how such memorials help them in coping with trauma emanating from such tragedies.<sup>35</sup>

This research phenomenon constitutes what is variously referred to as ‘grassroots’, ‘spontaneous’, ‘ephemeral’, or ‘makeshift’ memorials defined by Santino (2011:98) as “... temporary memorials that people construct, on their own initiative to mark the site of untimely deaths. These memorial assemblages are usually made up of flowers, personal memorabilia, written notes as well as religious icons.” To qualify as a spontaneous memorial, any one or all of the above may be present. Margry and Sanchez-Carretero (2011) observe

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<sup>35</sup>A research report titled ‘Sensitive Telling and Secret Things in the Collections of Museums’ I co-authored with Christine Fredriksen was published in the Bohuslans Year Book (2005)

that the phenomenon of ‘grassroots memorials’ has since the 1980s become a ‘mentally inscribed’ and practically ‘instrumentalized’ ritual providing a template for public reaction to traumatic action or crisis culminating in death, especially in Western Europe and the United States of America. This impulse to create a memorial accords with Connerton’s (1989) theories of incorporating practices while the writings on the memorial cards and artworks devoted to the dead is a record of the events, which will serve to remind those who will access it long after the tragedy that occurred. Cooper & Sciorra (1994) suggest that mass-scale paramilitary attacks are commonly reacted to with written messages to the deceased and the public. Zeitlin (2006) observes that written objects have recently been considered in studies of catastrophe shrines where they are treated as part of the creative response to tragedy.

Immediately prior to the Nairobi terrorist attack, Renee Klarenbeek,<sup>36</sup> Thom Ogonga and Patrick Mukabi<sup>37</sup> had, without knowing what significance it would attain, set out to do a socio-political commentary project to document what ordinary Kenyans thought of their newspapers’ headline news. They erected a one-square-metre canvas – referred to in this study as the Daily Billboard – on Aga Khan Walk, Nairobi, to solicit comments from the public. At the end of the day, the artists recorded these comments and painted a new screen over the previous one to await the next day’s comments. When the terrorists struck, it provided them with a new subject of focus; in a period of three weeks after the attack over 1400 people had commented. The Daily Billboard was among the first efforts to document the memory of the Nairobi terror attack. Writing on the board became part of communal action in the creative expression of grief; and it was spontaneous on the part of the individual writers considering that they were stimulated to comment on encountering the board while passing by the site.

The messages contained in the postings are consistent with the objectives of spontaneous memorials: they are responses to tragic events by individuals and non-organized groups desirous of expressing their personal utterances of grief, social and/or political disaffection with a view to influencing change to avert recurrence of similar events (Castells, 1983). They

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<sup>36</sup>A visiting Dutch artist on an exchange programme with Kuona Trust, a privately-funded organization promoting the development of Kenyan art and artists.

<sup>37</sup>Kenyan artists affiliated to Kuona Trust.

are temporary in nature and target an immediate audience to provoke social action by seeking answers to why death occurred while challenging somebody to take responsibility (Margry & Sanchez-Carretero, 2011). The writings and drawings posted on the Daily Billboard were particularly meant to realize social action and express protest. Messages such as, “You made my city cry, lots of tears have been shed, untold pain experienced. Why?” and “The Americans came and locked the stable after the horse had bolted” by Caleb Omondi and an anonymous person respectively ask for action from both American and Kenyan governments. Nairobi residents and any passers-by indeed, were free to inscribe their reactions and experiences on the board. The process of inscribing the horrors of the attack in messages condemning the terrorists, expressing grief, compassion and patriotism were externalized through the board becoming the collective narratives of the nation. Arguably, the Daily Billboard became the ‘shrine’ for expressing the collective grief afflicting the nation.

In Nairobi, the collective act mirroring the creation of spontaneous memorials was the immediate donation of food, clothing, medicine, water and services by various organized groups and individuals to the rescue centres set up in hospitals to attend to the injured. This spontaneity could be described as a collective response by Kenyans to the tragedy with a view to seeking association with the injured – not the dead – and a way of condemning the terrorists. It was also a demonstration of ‘national unity’ hitherto unseen in the aftermath of tragedies with high fatalities such as the ethnic clashes of 1992. This could be explained by the fact that Kenyans saw the attack as directed at them as a nation.

The Nairobi Daily Billboard and the spontaneous roadside memorials in VastraGotaland, Sweden, briefly mentioned above, meet the three objectives that personal expressions left at memorials aim to accomplish. They are expressions of personal grief in response to a tragedy; in this case the bombing tragedy and the loss of a dear one through a road accident respectively. The expression of either social or political disaffection is discernible in both instances. The messages in response to the Nairobi bombing are heavily-laden with condemnations of both the terrorists and the Americans (especially the American Marines) for the attack and the response to the terror respectively. Whereas in VastraGotaland, the expression of disaffection is of a social kind, which disapproves of the speeding, carelessness, and the poor state of the roads – in some instances. In both instances, those affected and the public through such messages aim to avoid a recurrence.

Consistent with its abstract role as the trusted memory of the nation, Nairobi Museum working with Kuona Trust arranged to exhibit these messages in the museum. The Nairobi Museum is a public institution whose exhibitions target the general public and is visited by people of all walks of life ranging from school parties, international tourists, residents and non- resident clientele. It receives an average of 400,000 visitors per year with about 60% being school groups.



Fig.3.1: The Daily Billboard exhibition at the Nairobi Museum, 1998 (Photo: NMK).

The exhibition contained all 1400 messages, each on a white A-1 flipcharts written in blue, black and red colours. These flipcharts were not framed but just glued to the walls



maintaining the character and experience of makeshift memorials. They looked temporary with the hand-written messages contributing to the impression they were written in a hurry. Notwithstanding this appearance, the texts turned out as one big wall-to-wall art piece.

Upon its de-installation, the Kuona Trust retrieved the exhibition but it eventually disintegrated. By the time of undertaking this study, I was unable to access the exhibition in its entirety but only parts recorded photographically either by the artists at the original site on Aga Khan Walk or by museum photographers<sup>38</sup> during the exhibition. The fact that the exhibition was not stored or accessed into any museum collection thereafter accords with the purposes of spontaneous memorials: they aim to convey evocative messages commanding a high level of attention and visibility for a short period after which they disappear as spontaneously as they came into being (Margry & Sanchez-Carretero, 2011). Purity Senewa,<sup>39</sup> one of the exhibition curators, stated that they had not intended to keep the A-1 sheets of paper exhibited; these were to be photographed and stored in the NMK and Kuona Trust databases. However, this did not happen and the exhibition ended up meeting the fate that many temporary exhibitions in African museums that are curated without an accompanying catalogue, their records vanish. In this study, therefore, I am only able to analyse 92 legible texts accessed and use them as my representative sample. While these messages appeared to be repetitive, there were minor variations, which enabled their categorization into six message-types to obtain the results provided in table 3a.

Table 3a: Categorization of Messages by Type

No	Message type	No of entries	%
1	God Bless Kenya and exhortation for National Unity	25	27
2	Sharing the pain and grief of loss	16	17
3	Condemnation of acts of terrorism and/or its perpetrators	7	8
4	United States of America's culpability	15	16
5	Personal experience of the tragedy and the desire never to forget	23	25
6	Others	6	7
Total		92	100

<sup>38</sup>The Audio Visual department of the Nairobi Museum documents all temporary exhibitions in the museum through either photography or video.

<sup>39</sup> Ms Senewa is a colleague of mine and we have on various occasions discussed matters regarding this exhibition.

A visitors' comment-book was provided in the NMK exhibition. Though the number of visitors to this exhibition is estimated at 18,000<sup>40</sup>, very few of them commented. In order to make meaningful use of these comments, I did not deviate from the message-type framework used in the analysis in table 3a above, though this was not without challenge. It was difficult to wholly fit some messages into these categories without becoming subjective. I must at this juncture, point out that I only selected for analysis messages that were spot-on on the topic of the exhibition and excluded those that dwelt on several topics, some of which had no relevance to my subject matter. Table 3b below summarizes the visitors' comments:

Table3b: Visitor's Comments by %

No	Message type	No of entries	%
1	God Bless Kenya and exhortation for National Unity	33	14
2	Sharing the pain and grief of loss	44	20
3	Condemnation of acts of terrorism and its perpetrators	17	7.5
4	United States of America's culpability	13	6
5	Personal experience of the tragedy and the desire never to forget	28	12.5
7	Others	89	40
Total		224	100

Of the 224 visitors, 40% made comments regarding other aspects of the museum which were irrelevant to the exhibition; a normal occurrence in the Nairobi Museum. However, an examination of the addresses indicates that a majority in this category are students from upcountry schools. Implicitly, the effect of the tragedy was never an issue of major concern to people from outside Nairobi, especially schoolchildren. They could have heard of the bombing without directly experiencing an aspect of it, hence their lack of interest in the exhibition. See 5.3.3. for a comparative perspective with members of the Peace Builder's Kids Club visits to the Documentation Centre.

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<sup>40</sup>This figure is based on Nairobi Museum monthly statistics for October 1998 but the records are not gallery-specific. It is assumed that they visit all the galleries.

The second and third highest number of those visiting the exhibition stated that they shared the pain and grief of loss; and narrated their personal experience of the tragedy and the desire never to forget it. I argue that the messages in this exhibition provided its visitors with a context for reflection and remembrance evoking the emotions of what transpired, hence inspiring memory and healing. Wycliff Nyamanga's<sup>41</sup> comment that;

‘Until today, I had not come to terms with whatever happened on that day. Today, I bear witness to the grief that engulfed our nation; violence, destruction and terrorism do no good to humanity. Today, I am stronger in the knowledge that together we triumphed’.

This statement is comparable to Gardner's (2011:299) view regarding the exhibition organized by the National Museum of American History in the aftermath of September 11, which “provided the public a space for commemoration and memorialization, acknowledging the many voices and perspectives of the day giving visitors opportunities to contribute, not simply to observe”. In other words, it provided a shared space for civic healing. The interpretation of other aspects captured in tables 3a & b will be explored in a subsequent chapter.

A second exhibition in response to this tragedy was “The Bomb Terror”, organized by Shine Tani at Goethe Institute, Nairobi. Artists from Banana Hill Arts Studio formed the core of the exhibition, with several others from Kuona Trust participating. The narratives constituted by the artworks were derived from the varied ways the artists experienced the bombing: there are those who were in town and went to the site to see what happened; others experienced it through television and newspaper reportage; while others were vicarious, based on the narrations of those who were present. It is through these frames that they responded by producing works of visual art based on their own subjectivities, which nonetheless inscribed the bomb blast tragedy in narrative form. The exhibition was partly supported by Organization Recovery (OR) and some donor agencies to help people manage the collective trauma emanating from the bombing tragedy.

All the 46 paintings on exhibition gave different perspectives to the tragedy. This study elected to examine only four of the 46 paintings for they encapsulated the narratives of

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<sup>41</sup> A visitor to the exhibition.

traumatic memory depicting the whole gamut beginning with the capture of the event as it unfolded, its transmission as news, the creation of memory and trauma-memory healing. Representation of the chaotic scenes of crowded streets, burnt and collapsing buildings, the injured strewn about the place, and damaged vehicles around the U.S. embassy building and its environs in the aftermath of the bombing, are the moments characteristically captured by many artists included in this exhibition. Cartoon Joseph, for instance, in his work ‘Is it the End of the Earth’ uses a montage of newspaper cuttings of photographs depicting the tragedy against a background of crowded scenes of traumatized people and the buildings in the vicinity. The superimposed photographs capture the actuality of the event and the role of the media in disseminating it.



Fig.3.2: *Is it the End of the Earth?* Cartoon Joseph, Mixed media. Reproduced from *African Arts*, Vol. 38, No 3, pp.71.

It should be remembered that some of them learnt of the tragedy through the media hence the presentation of the tragedy as a media event. Wanjohi Nyamu’s ‘Airwaves’ further exemplifies this category of works. His formulation is that of a howling dog, triggered perhaps by the collapsing building in the background with a transistor radio transmitting the event to the world (Kasfir, 2005).



Fig.3.3: *Airwaves*. Wanjohi Nyamu, Oil on Canvass.  
Reproduced from *African Arts*, Vol. 38, No 3, pp. 70.

Against this understanding, the exhibition itself is also seen as a medium through which the bombing tragedy is communicated. This body of work argues for the place of visual art as an important medium in the production of memories of tragedy. While all the works exhibited are illustrative of this view, I pick on James Mbuthia's 'I can Remember' to illustrate this point.



Fig.3.4: *I Can Remember*. James Mbuthia. Oil on Canvass.  
Reproduced from *African Arts*, Vol. 38, No 3, pp. 67.

The centre of the painting focuses on rescue efforts and shows a bleeding woman being lifted from the scene towards an ambulance in the background. Another victim is on a doctor's bed undergoing examination. In the middle part of the painting too is a wrecked vehicle bearing the registration, KENYA, perhaps symbolising the damage inflicted upon the nation as a

whole through this bombing. The lower left corner of the painting has the President visiting the scene while in the lower middle part is an American Marine with his gun firmly held with a *bandana* tied around his head depicting a Rambo<sup>42</sup>-like image of the US Marines. This depiction is perhaps a reminder of the ruthlessness of the marines in their quest to not only secure but also rescue anything American that remained in the collapsed U.S. embassy building. The lower right side depicts a man on a wheelchair in a pose suggestive of mourning - his palm holds his cheek as he gazes at a body. The Cooperative Bank Building provides the general background to this depiction.

This picture encapsulates the main events that happened on that tragic day that are remembered by many of the survivors, and corroborated by first-hand narrative accounts. This includes the injuries sustained and loss of life, the rescue efforts, insensitivity of the American Marines and the show of unity demonstrated by Kenyans during the rescue period. As previously stated, the purpose of the exhibition at the Goethe Institute was to help the survivors manage the traumatic memory occasioned by the bombing; I examine Donald Maingi's<sup>43</sup> work titled '*Chokora*'<sup>44</sup> against this objective. In an interview (Personal interview, London, 09.03.2012), he had this to say:

“I never thought that I could suffer such an emotional scare, it was my first time to see Kenyans being patriotic in helping their brothers and sisters. However what made me suffer even more was the way street children did not receive the needed attention. I saw this *chokora* who was lying down next to the embassy building, injured and unable to move, as he tried to wake up, people were stepping on him as they reached out to save other victims who looked dignified. I never thought that the class issue would arise at that moment. I was speechless and devastated. The image of the child haunted me until I made that painting. My most excitable moment was the moment I

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<sup>42</sup>Rambo is an American action film -series starring Sylvester Stallone, a troubled Vietnam War veteran who is skilled in many aspects of combat, survival, and guerrilla warfare. He often ruthlessly employs these skills in the rescue missions he is assigned.

<sup>43</sup> Donald Maingi started painting since childhood on walls in their house using mud as a way of expressing himself. He had a difficult childhood devoid of love and appreciation and it was perhaps as a result of this that he was interested in painting life in the streets as experienced by the street children. At the time of the bombing, he had been commissioned by Gallery Watatu to produce 100 works of art focusing on their life.

<sup>44</sup>Swahili for children who live and eke out a livelihood in the streets in Kenya.

saw a street child looking at this painting and weeping uncontrollably; I realised that it was the beginning of self- searching for the young one”.



Fig. 3.5: *Chokora*. Donald Maingi. 1999. Oil on Canvas.  
(Photo: Artist’s own collection).

I identify two readings of Mr Maingi’s work. The first is the traumatic healing he personally experienced after completing the work. He says that this image kept on recurring in his mind and it was only after he painted it that he felt relieved and fulfilled. Arguably, his own traumatic memory as a child found an expression in this work: he found a platform that enabled him to narrate some of the emotional suffering he himself experienced as a child. The street child weeping on seeing this painting is the other moment of healing triggered by this painting. The self-discovery Mr Maingi refers to implicates; other street children visiting the exhibition who are enabled to emotionally connect with it by seeing that their pain as human beings had been recognised.

Having discussed the temporary exhibitions at both the Nairobi Museum and Goethe Institute curated in response to the bombing, I now turn to describe the Documentation Centre’s display dedicated to remembering the bombing tragedy. In one of its sections, visitors are encouraged to share their stories of what they recall of the 7<sup>th</sup> August 1998, their personal experiences and how it impacted on them. I then compare these testimonials with what was documented in the Daily Billboard in the aftermath of the tragedy.

### 3.1.1. The Documentation Centre

The Documentation Centre, funded by a donation from the U.S. Government, opened in 2004 as a museum and historical archive of the 1998 Nairobi terror attack. The centre is open to members of the public; anyone can walk in upon payment of the requisite admission fees. It tells the story of the bombing and its aftermath in an exhibition organized into five sections using a mix of media and styles: written texts, photographs, artefacts and video documentaries. Implicitly, the exhibition communicates different messages to its visitors, it starts with a brief historical background and development of Nairobi as Kenya's capital city then takes the visitors through a time- line of activities of the day of the bombing beginning with the calm prevailing on the morning of 7<sup>th</sup> August 1998. It was a day like any other with people engaged in ordinary activities: going to the bank, being at work, waiting for a friend, applying for a visa, having tea, reading a newspaper, and so on. This is told through personal narratives such as:

“My name is Patrick. I am a businessman and was in my office on the fifth floor of Solar House, opposite the former US embassy. I was reading a newspaper”, another reads “...it was a normal day; I was waiting to enter Co-operative Bank with my wife.”

These narratives show the people affected as innocent, going about the daily activities of life oblivious of any hatred by the perpetrators against the US or what the day had in store for them.

This section is followed with an overview of terrorism activities in Kenya<sup>45</sup> prior and subsequent to the 1998 US embassy attack; specific mention is made of the attacks in 1980 of the Norfolk Hotel Nairobi and in 2002 on the Kikambala Paradise Hotel in Mombasa. Here, the irony is recalled that in all these terrorist acts, Kenyans suffered most, yet they were not the primary targets.

The ‘Blast Moment’ or ‘Black Friday’, - as the 1998 embassy attack is remembered, captures the chaotic scenes in and around the embassy building with photographs of burnt buildings,

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<sup>45</sup>See Chapter 1



strewn bodies, and mangled vehicle-wrecks displayed. These photos evoke the chaotic scenes prevailing in the aftermath of the attack and are intended to create an experience of the bombing to engender empathy and shock in visitors. The photograph of a mangled-burning Kenya Bus No 126, which was over 100 metres away from the embassy, for instance, evokes the power of the bomb. This chaotic scene is captured aptly in this section's exhibition text: "We were injured, we stumbled on pavements bleeding, and wailing sirens of the ambulances and the enormous mass of rubble marked the site".

A display of objects donated to the exhibition by the bereaved is next. Among these are: a necktie donated by a widow whose husband had worn it; a document wallet with blood stained papers belonging to Mr Madegwa who died in the blast; and a glass case containing bottles with foreign bodies removed from some survivors. The last one is accompanied with the message: 'I was at the Kenya Railways when the bomb exploded. I sustained head injury and was in a coma for six weeks. Pieces of glass were removed from my left cheek on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1999'.



Fig. 3.6: Glass shards removed from the survivors' body, Nairobi, 2010, (Photo: Kiprop Lagat).

Having them in their damaged, dusty and blood-stained forms, these objects stand in for the bodies of the injured and dead. De Becker (2012: 153) discusses the powerful role of personal possessions, such as clothes, in representing victims of tragedies such as the genocide in

Rwanda. She argues that such clothing serves as a kind of memory due to the imprint that their owners have left on them; they are “projections of the human body that re-animate, a now absent people” (Scarry, 1985:281). Personal belongings, Auslander (2003:244) suggests, also “constitute a particular metonymic situation – the inanimate objects document and mark the ‘gonennes’ and the loss instead of simply substituting for them through representation”. It is against this context that the handbag and necktie (Fig. 3.7) displayed in the Documentation Centre ought to be understood.



Fig.3.7: Handbag and necktie retrieved from the site and donated for exhibition.  
(Photo: Kiprop Lagat, 2010).

The stories attached and the confidence imparted to these objects by survivors, widows and widowers, family members and their descendants convert the exhibition space into one of private mourning and public ceremony. In accepting the donation of objects of the August 7<sup>th</sup> 1998 bombing, they are conferred with special status in telling the narrative of that day to the public, and hence become part of the collective memory of the tragedy (William, 2007; Margry & Sanchez-Carretero, 2011). Nora (1989) posits that moments of rupture are important in the generation of collective memory. These ‘rupture moments’ transform the everyday, vernacular, contemporary objects into heritage (Samuel, 1994). It is against this background that some of the objects on display in the Documentation Centre that were retrieved from their context of rupture but previously used as ordinary functional objects

(neckties, handbag, and notebooks) are imbued with new meanings qualifying them as *aide de memoire* for they bear testimony to the Nairobi terror attack.

The exhibition Curator, Ms. Amunga states, “the purpose of building the collection is to inform and educate the general public on the August 7 1998 bomb blast and to assist in the efforts towards peace and reconciliation, *memory and healing*.<sup>46</sup>”

The material culture of grief represented by objects in the Documentation Centre could be seen as repositories of feelings and emotions. They constitute a relationship between the donor and the Memorial Park allowing the former to accept that traumatic death occurred. The presence of objects embodies a public grief that binds the living and the dead (Doss, 2008, Hallam & Hockey, 2001).

Commemorating the first anniversary is the next focus of the exhibition. This part utilizes photography as a medium and shows what happened during the first anniversary. Prudence Bushnell, then US Ambassador to Kenya, lays a wreath of commemoration as does the Principal of Blanes Secretarial College<sup>47</sup> and the families of the bereaved. Images depicting the large numbers in attendance, including survivors, some still on crutches, are displayed. The significance of the numbers, as will be discussed later in this chapter, underscores the level of trauma being experienced then.

A ‘Share Your Story’ section follows. Here, visitors are provided with writing materials and are encouraged to share their stories, their experiences and the impact this tragedy had on them. The encouragement to write is arguably intended to generate diverse narratives of cultural memory representing the tragedy. Pinning and frequently changing the messages on the wall is for the purpose of sharing the diverse experiences, which could lead to a better understanding of the tragedy and lessening its trauma.

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<sup>46</sup>Emphases are mine.

<sup>47</sup>13 of its students died when the building housing their college collapsed.

### **3.1.2. Construction and Transmission of Bomb-blast Memories**

In this section, I compare messages inscribed in the Daily Billboard in 1998 with the testimonials registered in the Documentation Centre since its opening in 2004. This comparison allows us to examine how memory is shaped through time.

As a tragedy of this nature and magnitude had not previously been experienced in Kenya, its impact reverberated far and wide. It got extensive coverage in the media for more than a month becoming a commonly discussed subject in work places, pubs, churches, markets, and so on. The discussions, narrations and commemorations are processes to enable people to deal actively with the disorienting event and to convert disorder into order (Balandier, 1998). Exhibiting memories of the bombing as captured in the documented messages is born of the intention to ensure that such a historical experience is remembered. The messages analysed reveal a general wish by the visitors to have this tragedy remembered.

This analysis further reveals that with the passage of time the details of what is remembered diminishes. In the messages posted on the Daily Billboard immediately after the tragedy, people wrote of the exact places they were, what they were doing and with whom, on hearing the first blast and what they thought it was before the second blast came as well as their reactions to it. Those near the scene remembered the details of what they saw. However, the later testimonials in the Documentation Centre are lacking in accuracy though they recall the events of the tragedy and what they did at the time. The lack of accuracy suggests that some of the facts could have been learnt from the media. This study also found out that the messages written during the annual commemorations on the 7<sup>th</sup> of August contain details echoing the ones in the Daily Billboard. While the details of these messages are more or less the same, there are significant differences. The ones in the Daily Billboard were spontaneous and hence accurately capture the events as they unfolded, those in the Documentation Centre lack the accuracy – as memories of tragedies weaken with time – requiring collective acts of commemoration to be reinforced.

The records in the Documentation Centre reveal that a high number of school-groups from within Nairobi visit the centre, with many of them writing their testimonies. I found it necessary to analyse what those in primary school had to say since none of them had been born by 1998. Their messages are characterised by expressions of sorrow for the life lost,

wishes of peace to Kenyans and their shock to learn that an event this tragic happened in their country. Their experiences are mediated through *representation, projection and creation* (Williams, 2007:167) in the Centre's display of objects, photographs and screening of documentary films. The content of their messages demonstrates their experience of memory as retold in the Centre in a powerful and evocative manner forming what Marrienne Hirsch (2008) has called '*postmemory*'. Though they did not have a first-hand experience of the bombing, the photographs and documentary films in the exhibition recount it to them in a way that makes them experience it as though they were physically present at the time. Arguably, the memories mediated through first-account recollection as narrated in the Daily Billboard and the post-memory are both powerful means of memory creation and transmission that continue to shape how the terror attack is remembered.

The messages in the Daily Billboard covered an array of subjects ranging from condemnation of terrorism, America's culpability, praise of heroic acts, the recovery, national unity, pain and suffering, and the shared personal experiences of the tragedy. The tone and language of the condemnatory messages was tinged with elements of anger and bitterness expressing the raw emotions of the period. The feelings of many other Kenyans at the time are encapsulated in messages such as:

“Terrorists should never be given a chance to live, terrorism is barbaric, demonic and death-based;”<sup>48</sup> and

“...Kenyans just like Americans are human beings, we suffer pain and shed blood just as Americans, why discriminate against our people like animals?”<sup>49</sup>

Some of these subjects are repeated in the testimonial messages in the Documentation Centre, albeit differently. Messages written out ten-to-eleven years<sup>50</sup> later, are pacifying and advocate tolerance, peace, justice and forgiveness. The following are typical:

“To all persons in general, may you find love in your hearts that has no bounds so that you love persons from every tribe and race equally (including terrorists). Let us stop prejudice in all aspects of our lives and let peace prevail over violence.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>Ben Mule. 23.08.1998.

<sup>49</sup>Isaiah Kangogo, 23.08.1998.

<sup>50</sup>The testimonials analysed in the Documentation Centre only cover the period 2009-2011.

<sup>51</sup>David Ogaki.14.09.2009.

“In this world we do not live by chaos neither by violence but by truth and justice. One day truth and justice will come to pass.”<sup>52</sup>

The bitterness elicited by the American Marines’ treatment of Kenyans during the rescue process is now moderated. Gikenyi Ombonyo, for instance, in an undated message states:

“...Kenyans and Americans have travelled a long journey together, and that is not about to end regardless of whatever threats thrust along the way. God Bless Kenya, God Bless USA”.

It is also possible that the Obama-effect could have contributed to this positive change of attitude towards the Americans by those commenting in this exhibition on the 1998 Nairobi terror attack. This is for the reason that with Barack Obama’s election as President of the USA in 2009, many Kenyans warmed up to America for in him they saw a ‘Kenyan’ in the White House owing to his father’s Kenyan ancestry.

In Chapter 2, I discussed the terror attack and the various responses offered by the Kenyan government, the public, the American Marines and all other teams, such as the Israeli and British experts that were called in to offer rescue efforts. While there was overwhelming support for these teams, the Kenyan public singled out the American Marines for condemnation for their determination to block ordinary Kenyans from participating in the rescue efforts. This was demonstrated in the newspaper editorials, televised talk shows and in letters to the editors of the Kenyan press. Messages in the Daily Billboard were equally critical of the perceived insensitivity of the American Marines at a time when their understanding was most needed. The perpetrators of this heinous crime were not equally spared condemnation.

While one would have expected these sentiments to be carried through to the Documentation Centre, the messages therein are moderate in their condemnation, especially of the American Marines and their government. Considering that the Documentation Centre was built five years after the terror attack, it is arguable that those commenting on this tragedy have with time revised their attitudes towards the perpetrators and the Americans. Implicitly, the memories of the tragedy have diminished with the passage of time, as has the bitterness it

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<sup>52</sup>Andrew Chege.10.10.2010.

engendered. Many of the survivors have also been healed of their physical injuries and psychological trauma and have integrated memories of the tragedy into their personal narratives of life, therefore leading to forgiveness and understanding.

The other point to emphasise in concluding this section is the important role played by museums in transacting traumatic memories and helping the public manage grief. Applying Assmann's (1995) conception of the constitution of collective memory illustrates the amelioration of active grief through its transaction through memory and history.

Transforming contemporary memories of the bomb blast from the day-to-day verbal discussions and converting them into a museum collection, as happened in this case, is a temporal movement from 'communicative memory' through 'cultural memory' to 'history'. In the context of the Nairobi terror attack, it means that the memories of the attack have moved from being discussed and performed when the 'communicators' are physically present, such as during the annual commemorative rituals, before they are transformed to a representation of the past in the form of the Memorial Park and the Documentation Centre where they are given new meaning in a different social and historical context. The fact that this happened within a very short time-span of five years unlike the temporal time-periods of between 80 and 100 years as referred to by Assmann,<sup>53</sup> (ibid) suggests the Documentation Centre is fulfilling its purpose in mediating the traumatic effects of the tragedy.

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<sup>53</sup> This does not, however, mean that its existence as part of the everyday 'communication memory' ceased. Its *objectivation* transforms it to cultural memory (monuments, film documentary and objects) enabling it to last for another hundreds if not thousands of years.

## **Part II: The Commemorations**

### **3.2.1. Introduction**

I move now to describe events marking the thirteenth anniversary of the tragedy and discuss the role these activities played in mediating trauma suffered as a result of the bombing. The first section of this part mainly describes and analyses the activities and performances during this annual national commemoration of the 1998 Nairobi terror attack. The section that follows describes a different form of memorialisation of this same event but one that takes place within the confines of a family, and is dedicated to remembering an individual who died during this tragedy. This leads to a comparative discussion of how these two forms are enacted and concludes by mentioning other ways by which some families have opted to commemorate this event.

### **3.2.2. A Description of the Commemoration**

Events commemorating the August 7<sup>th</sup> 1998 Nairobi terror attacks have been held annually since 1999. While the shape the commemoration takes has differed from one year to another, the objectives and basic structures of the event have remained the same, “to remember all the 218 people that lost their lives in the bomb attack of 1998 and pay tribute to the over 5,000 others coping with permanent injuries or the loss of a loved one” as contained in the speech of Mr Mwadama, the Chairman of the August Seventh Bomb-blast Victims Association (ASBVA)<sup>54</sup> on 7<sup>th</sup> August 2011.

I participated in the 13<sup>th</sup> anniversary commemorations as an observer. I arrived at the Memorial Park - armed with a camera and notebook - at around 8.30 am and proceeded to a vantage point in one of the tents that would enable a good observation of all the activities. I

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<sup>54</sup>The association is a registered umbrella body that brings together all those who suffered injuries during the bomb-blast and family members of those who lost loved ones to advocate for their welfare including their quest for compensation.



was soon joined by the survivors, the victims' relatives and perhaps their family members and friends, and journalists from both the local and international media. By the time the event was formally started at around 10.00 am, there were slightly more than 200 people in the park. Though a majority of those in attendance were the victims and their relatives, there were other participants who had just walked in from the streets to participate in this event. As the programme unfolded, I occasionally stood to take photographs, just as other attendees were doing. While the chair of the victims association knew me in person, I did not want to be introduced as this would have probably influenced some participants into playing for the camera or even altering their speeches.<sup>55</sup> Those who saw me take photographs would probably have thought that I was part of the media fraternity.

The venue for the annual commemoration has always been the August Seventh Memorial Park, in downtown Nairobi. The survivors and their relatives are given white ribbons and tags as marks of identification separating them from the rest of the participants. Their status mirrors that of initiates in liminal states with markers of signification that symbolically indicate their status (Turner, 1982): they are initiates in a ceremony to heal them of the traumatic memories of the bombing. Other attendees start arriving at the venue from around 9.00 am and begin either by interacting among themselves or by engaging with the Memorial Park monuments in varied ways.

There are those who go to the wall of names and kneel down in silent reflection; others sit under the trees to pray. Monuments as observed by Benton (2010) enable the grieving to replace the deceased loved ones with a new object - in this case the *Wall of Names*. This, for instance, was best demonstrated at the park on the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2011 when news of Osama Bin Laden's killing was received in Kenya. According to Sidialo,<sup>56</sup> a couple of survivors and families of the bereaved congregated at the Memorial Park to commemorate their tragedy while expressing their satisfaction that justice had at last been delivered. Some did not have

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<sup>55</sup> I had been warned by the chairman that should they know that I was a government employee, they would have addressed their grievances to me hoping that I would be in a position to help advocate for their plight in government circles.

<sup>56</sup> Personal interview, Nairobi, 10<sup>th</sup> January 2012.



Fig.3.8: Survivors engage with *Wall of Names*, Nairobi, 2011.  
(Photo: Kiprop Lagat).

words to express their feelings; they thoughtfully gazed at the names on the wall, others bowed their heads in contemplation and prayer. Debatably, they were there to ‘inform’ the departed of the killing of Osama therefore atoning for their death.

The singing of the national anthem at 10.00 am signals the start of the formal event. This is followed with a Christian sermon and prayers that end at 10.30 am when the gathering is asked to stand up and observe a minute of silence in memory of the departed. In their deference, heads are bowed in silent prayer and contemplation; those wearing hats remove them. Edkins (2003) posits that in observance of a minute of silence, the memories of the past are brought to the present ‘time’ and that ‘time’ is only ‘now’. Bringing the past to the present in the observance of a minute of silence allows the participants to pause for reflection and remember what transpired.

The other observation I made during the thirteenth anniversary was the launch of a peace symbol. The symbol itself is the map of Kenya on a blue woven mat with a dove carrying a twig, presumably an olive branch.<sup>57</sup>



Fig.3.9: Peace Symbol, Nairobi, 2011.  
(Photo: Kiprop Lagat).

This piece was created by Rahab Kamau whose husband survived the attack and has since established a cottage industry specializing in knitting. Survivors of the bombing willing to learn new skills, which could enable them to earn a living are taught free of any fees. This knitting involving the survivors is also helpful in reducing their trauma; it provides them with a platform to come together to engage in a meaningful act while sharing their memories of the tragedy. The map and the dove are white with the word 'peace' written below it. The official logo of the Memorial Park also has the map of Kenya and a dove in green and white

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<sup>57</sup>Use of olive branch as a peace symbol dates back to at least 5<sup>th</sup> Century BCE. In Greek antiquity the olive represented plenty and was believed to chase away evil spirits. Early Christians portrayed baptism by a bird holding an olive branch in its beak and used the image on their sepulchres as a peace allegory.

colours respectively. The symbols are imbued with messages of peace in accordance with the objectives of the Memorial Park.

The next phase in the ceremony was the lighting of candles, thirteen in number with each representing a year since the bombing tragedy. Wreaths and flowers were laid by family, survivors and friends at the foot of the memorial wall in tribute to the dead, whose names are inscribed on the wall. I made several observations of the participants' behaviour at this point; there were those who laid the flowers and left, others searched the names of those they knew from the wall, touched and caressed them as they uttered words to them, while others knelt down in prayer - some with rosaries - for a couple of minutes. Unlike other memorials or commemorative events elsewhere, flowers seemed the dominant 'things' brought by relatives and friends to remember their dead. One exception, however, was a note left at the site addressed to 'Brother Paul' and signed Githinji:

“Brother, I today can say *kwaheri*,<sup>58</sup> my heart will tonight rest. Perhaps I won't see you again in my dreams as we struggle down the stairs of Ufundi House, glass, blood and fire killing us. We almost reached the ground, then I lost you....Tears welled up in my eyes when I touched your name, I remember that day, fare thee well, brother, we will meet again”.

The wording of the note demonstrates a desire by Githinji to give a narrative closure to his trauma through revelation of his inner feelings addressed to his departed colleague. These actions demonstrate that the wall provides the participants with a place to mourn in remembrance of their dead hence legitimizing their individual and family grief (Hayden, 1987; Winter, 1995).

The event also featured drama, poetry and choral song performances by different groups. The play entitled '*Mahangaiko*'<sup>59</sup> centred on how the bomb blast survivors and their families have struggled for thirteen years without any concrete support from either the Kenyan or American governments. The play begins with a scene showing a jovial Ngugi and Alice in an office

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<sup>58</sup>Swahili for Bye- bye.

<sup>59</sup>Swahili for tribulations.

environment discussing work-related matters, the bombing occurs, they are both rescued but do not see each other again until one year later in a meeting for the bomb blast survivors convened by their employer. Ngugi, who now uses crutches, had resumed work but Alice who was blinded had been obliged to retire on medical grounds. They meet other colleagues with whom they worked in Ufundi Cooperative House, each one of them suffering from one ailment or another. They meet again during the thirteenth commemorative anniversary on the 7<sup>th</sup> of August at the Memorial Park. Ngugi who is an active member and official of ASBVA is delighted to see Alice. He invites Alice to share her experiences of the life after the blast. She narrates her tribulations starting with the bombing that rendered her blind and dependent on other people's support to do everything, her hurt following her husband's marrying of a second wife, her relocation to her parents' home in Nyakach in 2005, her challenges in getting money to continue with medication and to pay her son's college fees. These tribulations have made her lose hope in life. She breaks down emotionally and is assisted off the stage. Four more people take the platform to share their experiences. Alice connects with these confessions and asks for another chance to speak where she states that listening to the other survivors' problems lifted a burden off her heart as she learns that her tribulations were not unique to her. At the conclusion of the play, she joins the association and promises never to miss another commemorative event as this provided a healing balm to her heart.

The recital of the poem 'Farewell to August 7<sup>th</sup> 1998 Nairobi Bomb-blast Victims' by Kioko Musau had the survivors keenly listening to the words reminding them of that fateful day.

*It started as another day  
Like so many gone before  
Life getting another dawn  
To mark a distance between you and us.*

*Familiar voices, shouts and cries  
Sounds of a Friday kind  
Will never cease in our lives  
You paid for the price  
For a cause you never knew*

*God drew you nearer  
And Nairobi let you go.*

*But although you've left us  
Know that you did not go alone  
For a part of us went with you  
The day you dissolved in our eyes  
Our wound still bleeds  
Our tears still flow*

*For you are silent and gone.*

*But that look of hope in you  
Gives us strength and drives us on  
You'll always be beside us  
In all we say and do  
You were a great treasure.*

In communicating the loss through the poem's soothing words, the survivors' experience of the trauma is kindled. They respond to the recital by occasional nodding of their heads in agreement with the wording, though otherwise remaining silent throughout its recital. By emotionally engaging with the recital, their traumas are brought into conscious life and released through the murmured discussions (of personal narrative) that ensue after the poem's narration facilitating both individual and collective healing. (Antz & Lambek, 1996:125-126).

This is followed with a performance by Safari Sounds Choir under the stewardship of Ken Indiasi. Their highlight is the song, '*Luwere*',<sup>60</sup> a popular rendition adapted from a traditional Abaluhya<sup>61</sup> funeral dirge exhorting the relatives to accept that the deceased has transited to another life.<sup>62</sup>

*Luwere khulanga baba.....! luwere.....! luwere.....!*

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<sup>60</sup>An Afro-fusion version by Valentine Kasa adapted from a traditional Abaluhya dirge.

<sup>61</sup> A Bantu-speaking ethnic group constituting about 16% of Kenya's population and the second-largest community in Kenya.

<sup>62</sup>Explanation of meaning provided by Ray Balongo, an Abaluhya member of several choir groups in Nairobi.

*Luwere khulanga baba.....! luwere, luwere Nyasaye akhulinde...!*

*Luwere khulanga khocha....! luwere.....! luwere.....!*

*Luwere khulanga khocha..... luwere, luwere Nyasaye akhulinde...!*

The words of the song are repetitive; the only change is that a new kinship relation of the living to the deceased is introduced in every stanza.

Mr Indiasi, the soloist, is a good singer and dancer who can manipulate the emotions of the singers taking them through a variety of singing and emotional landscapes. This song created a cheerful and danceable environment for the participants, and more so the survivors, who join the choir in dancing and chanting notwithstanding some of their disabilities.



Fig.3.10: The survivors join Safari Sounds Choir in dance, Nairobi, 2011  
(Photo: Kiprop Lagat).

Being cheerful in the context of mourning is consistent with the Abaluhya belief that the dead person has been born in the world of the spirits, *emakhombe* (Alembi, 2002).

The final item in the programme is the Chairman's speech. Mr Mwadama started by reminding everyone that the event commemorates all the 218<sup>63</sup> people that died during the bomb blast and pays tribute to the over 5,000 others that suffered permanent injuries or lost

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<sup>63</sup> The names of the suicide bombers were not included in the memorial. It would have perhaps been awkward to memorialize them in the same monument yet their actions led to the death of 218 people. It would have complicated the healing by constantly reminding the survivors of those responsible for their suffering.

loved ones. He appreciates all those in attendance while castigating the Kenyan government for neglecting them, as demonstrated by their absence from the event. He states that such events in other countries are given importance by the government, as it is the state's citizens that died. He summarizes the challenges encountered by the survivors: their ill health, an inability to educate their children, unemployment, poverty and the failure to get any form of compensation. He expresses their hope that with the killing of Osama bin Laden in May 2011, victims of the Nairobi terror attack would be compensated from his vast wealth as had been ruled by Justice Bates.<sup>64</sup> He reminds the attendees that while Osama was a Muslim, he did not perpetrate the act on behalf of Islam but as a murderer. He hopes that the government will change its mind and pursue compensation on behalf of her citizens. Stating that they will never forget what happened in 1998, he exhorts the survivors to continue united in demanding justice and compensation.

The performances enacted during the annual commemorations in the form of songs, poems, speeches and drama help survivors confront traumatic memory. Repeating these performances annually - albeit with different performers and narrations of personal experiences of the tragedy - enables the survivors to 'process and master the trauma' by integrating the repeatedly told story of the bombing and its effects with their own personal narratives. They gain greater control over their memories by retrieving them from their repressed status in the sub-conscious mind to consciousness and then get integrated and adapted to their present social circumstances. Each survivor is able to recount how he/she was individually affected by the bombing; as they share their experiences, the trauma gets a social context and meaning making sense of the loss. This way, the survivors construct narrative memories that become part of their history (Sturken, 2007; Antz & Lambek, 1996:123). I suggest that the monuments in the park reinforce this integration of traumatic memory into narrative; their mere presence reminds the survivors of the tragic event. Pillemer (2004) posits that to be reminded about something painful - just like talking about it - although painful at first, produces long-term improvements in mood and indicators of well-being. It is against this understanding that the commemorative events have facilitated healing of the traumatic effects of the Nairobi terror attack.

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<sup>64</sup>See footnote 99.



### 3.2.3. Commemorating the Tragedy within the Family

Having described the official annual public commemoration of the Nairobi terror attack, I now focus on commemoration of a different nature, one mainly organized at family level and attended only by family members and friends of the deceased; this, I refer to as ‘family memorialisation’. A few other families who lost relatives in this tragedy organize similar memorials but it would be hard to ascertain the number, as some are localized events that are not broadcast or advertised in the newspapers. While a majority of those who died in this tragedy worked in Nairobi, they were not buried in the city; their bodies were taken back to their rural homes where they originated.

This Part describes one such memorial event held in memory of Mwangi Njuguna<sup>65</sup> in Maragwa on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> August 2011, a day before the thirteenth anniversary of the bomb blast.

I was informed of this event by one of the survivors of the 1998 Nairobi terror attack who worked with Mr Njuguna in Ufundi House and had earlier granted me an interview during this research. He accompanied me to Maragwa where he only introduced me as a friend.

Mwangi Njuguna, a Kikuyu, then thirty-seven years old, worked in Ufundi House as an accountant. On August 7<sup>th</sup> 1998 he was in his office when the terror attack occurred. His body was identified by his family three days later in the City Mortuary and he was buried five days later. On discovery of his body, meetings to arrange for his funeral were held by his family, friends and colleagues both in Nairobi and in his Maragwa home. These meetings were mainly for arranging funeral logistics including the raising of funds to meet the funeral costs. A key component of these logistics was the obituary in the daily newspapers announcing the passing on of Mr Njuguna. In the obituary, the picture of the deceased, looking his best, was centrally placed in the advert followed by a statement of what caused the death – in this case, the bomb blast – and his close kinship relations are named. The date, time and place of the funeral are included. Obituaries, Davies (1994) asserts, are acts about memorialisation

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<sup>65</sup>All names have been changed.

intended to constitute and project the identity of the deceased in public memory. Memory, individual and collective, is important for the constitution and maintenance of social identity (Anderson, 1991; Connerton, 1989). In Kenya, for instance, it is only close family members who write the obituary through a careful selection of what to include, especially the circumstances of death and a decision on kinship relations to be mentioned. In this way, they define the identity by which they wish to have the deceased remembered. The importance of this identity is underscored by the fact that the obituary is in many cases the final public notice of an individual's existence.

The family of Mr Njuguna does not attend the annual public commemorations of the bombing in Nairobi but organize their own at home for the family, friends and neighbours. The family members interviewed attributed their non-attendance at the Nairobi event to both the distance<sup>66</sup> to be travelled and especially their family's wish to have an event that brings them together in a kinship context. The commemoration in this case, therefore, serves to keep the memory of Njuguna in the family while strengthening the family bond and reinforcing their clan's identity.

The function started at 11.30 am; a prayer was said by a family member and was followed with a small self-introductory session. A few speeches are made by a family member, a friend to the departed and two neighbours before the sermon by the local priest. In his sermon, the priest exhorted the gathering to do good deeds and be at peace with others since no one knows their day and time of death. He reminded them to celebrate and continue remembering Mr Njuguna as a loved member of the family who initiated projects<sup>67</sup> that were beneficial to his family and their neighbours. He reminds the family members of their collective responsibility in caring for Mr Njuguna's family, as he would have done.

Those with wreaths are then led to the graveside to place them there while others scatter flowers. On the gravesite is an assemblage constituting of a Christian cross that has pinned onto it a memorial plaque indicating the deceased's dates of birth and death and bearing the words 'though you've physically gone from our midst you shall forever live in our hearts'.

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<sup>66</sup> It takes about one and a half hours of travel from Maragwa to travel to Nairobi.

<sup>67</sup> He was the treasurer of the Mai Maitu water project that enabled his villagers access piped water.

The cross is generally regarded as a Christian symbol for resurrection and after-life and a universal symbol signifying death, a common Western visual memory (Margry & Sanchez-Carretero, 2011). Only sixty-one people attended the event. In this particular event, the speeches and sermon and the material culture presented at the graveside, such as the cross, will safeguard the transmission of Njuguna's memory into the future.

#### **3.2.4. Commemorations: A Comparative Perspective**

As mentioned earlier, the numbers of those attending the annual commemorations at the Memorial Park have been on a downward path, an indication that many of the survivors and families of the bereaved have either healed or the focus is shifting towards commemoration of individual deaths in events held at the family level. This study suggests that both could be happening. It may be obvious, though true, stating that with time many of the survivors that sustained minor injuries have physically healed hence no longer see the need to attend these ceremonies. On the other hand, others have accepted that they indeed were victims of a terrorist bombing but have incorporated the trauma into their personal narrative of life and need not frequently attend the commemorations. It is also arguable that with the pursuit of compensation continuing as a central and dominant theme of the commemorations a decade and more on, many of the survivors no longer find it relevant to attend and have opted for more family-oriented events for remembrance to heal their own personal trauma. This view is supported by statements made during Mr Njuguna's 13th commemoration and an interview with Pamela Githaiga.<sup>68</sup>

Notwithstanding the emerging preference for 'family memorialization' by families of victims of the 1998 Nairobi terror attack, the national commemorative events held on the 7<sup>th</sup> August at the Memorial Park remain important – more so because the bombing was a national tragedy affecting people from different backgrounds. This underscores the appropriateness of consecrating a national memorial through the creation of *lieu de mémoire* (Nora, 1998). The Memorial Park will continue to represent the national memory of the bombing tragedy.

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<sup>68</sup> See page 132-134

Mr Njuguna's memorial event, apart from bringing the family and close friends together, also had an impact on the community. By participating in the event, the Maragwa community contributed towards the creation of localized narratives of the tragedy; the speeches, performances and the assemblage of notes, flowers and memorabilia laid on his grave on this day, helps heal this community where Njuguna had integrated.

This study also noted that on the 7<sup>th</sup> August, some Kenyans, survivors and families of the bereaved, engage in several activities to commemorate this day ranging from attending church service, visiting the sick, and having family memorials. Gillis (1994: 14) observes that, "... people now prefer to dedicate more time to the local, ethnic, and family memory, often using the national calendars and spaces *including new ones*<sup>69</sup> for these new purposes".

### **Part III: Conclusion**

In this chapter on 'The August 7th Memorial Park: Memories and Commemorations', I argued for the place of visual and performing art as an important medium in the production and transmission of memories of the August 7<sup>th</sup> Nairobi terror attack. The chapter further discussed the role of these forms of art and the annual commemorations in providing the survivors with a platform to share their personal experiences and to be reminded of what transpired on that fateful day. Purposeful remembrance, as happens during the annual commemoration, enable the survivors to 'work through' the tragedy which eventually paves the way to the production of more socially aware and integrated accounts, a state in which healing is made possible.

I first discussed the production of memories of the tragedy through the work of three artists namely, Renee Klarenbeek, Patrick Mukabi and Thom Ogonga who had set out to document what Kenyans thought of their newspapers' headline news by encouraging them to put down their reactions in a billboard they had erected along Aga Khan Walk, one of Nairobi's busiest walkways. The bombing provided these artists with a new subject of focus, the terror attack. This indeed became among the first effort to document the memories of the Nairobi terror

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<sup>69</sup>Emphasis is mine.

attack. Messages in the 'Daily Billboard, were later curated as an exhibition at the Nairobi Museum in a collaborative effort of the three artists, Kuona Trust and the museum itself. Here again, for a period of one month, the exhibition provided its visitors with a context for reflection and remembrance facilitating the production of further memories of this tragedy. A second exhibition titled, the 'Bomb Terror' organized by artist Shine Tani at the Goethe Institute, Nairobi, was yet another endeavour by the artists to create narratives of the tragedy based on their own experiences of the bombing. While this was intended to produce a narrative of the tragedy, the exhibition was also aimed at helping the people manage the collective trauma resulting from the bombing tragedy.

The creation of the Documentation Centre in the August 7<sup>th</sup> Memorial Park builds on the efforts of previous exhibitions on this subject by providing its visitors with an in-depth understanding of the scale of the tragedy that befell Nairobi on that fateful day. The exhibition here takes us through a journey that starts with a serene Nairobi prior to the attack, then the chaotic scenes arising thereafter, the physical effects of the bomb - on the buildings and individuals-, the survivor-stories, the commemorations, and finally a record of the visitors' stories. By taking the visitors through such a journey, the Documentation Centre becomes an important venue for the production and transmission of the collective memories of August 7<sup>th</sup> 1998 bombing.

Of what importance is the production and transmission of collective memories of the tragedy? In the second part of this chapter, I demonstrated how the commemorations at the Memorial Park, to quote Williams (2007: 6), have “continued to provide a socially supportive context for private grieving, reminding people that their loved ones did not die alone and that neither are they alone in their grieving state”. This study noted that the performances enacted during the annual commemoration in the form of songs, poems, speeches and drama help the survivors in confronting traumatic memory. The narrations of personal experience of the tragedy have further enabled the survivors to ‘process and master the trauma’ by integrating the repeatedly told story of the bombing and its effects with their own personal narratives hence facilitating the healing process. While narrations of personal experience have not been treated as performances in this body of work, they nevertheless constitute helpful practices that complement visual and performing art in the production and mediation of traumatic memory.

The discussions in this chapter, on the role of visual and performing art in creating and transmitting the memories of the tragedy, foreshadows the discussions of my next chapter. Chapter 4 will focus on the traumatic memories experienced by the survivors by demonstrating through examples how other forms of visual and performing art have supported the efforts towards provision of closure, hence supporting one of my central arguments in this body of work.

## Chapter 4: Trauma Memory and Healing

### 4.0. Introduction

In my previous chapter, I discussed the various forms of visual art that contributed to help the survivors of the 1998 bombing of the U.S. embassy in Nairobi to come to terms with the trauma induced by this tragedy. I focussed not only on the visual art programmes including exhibitions that were curated to document the bombing, but also on the annual commemorations and their importance in enabling the survivors convert their ‘traumatic memories’ to ‘narrative memory’ through their testimonies and interactions.

This chapter builds on the discussions in chapter 3, first by considering the understanding of trauma memory as adopted in this study, then looking at the specific methods employed in trauma healing. While the survivors were offered medical rehabilitation, it is noted that priority was given to those requiring surgical interventions, those who lost limbs, the blind and the deaf to restart their lives again; less attention was paid to processes geared towards making the survivors understand and manage the traumatic effects of the bombing.

In Part I of this chapter, I discuss the approaches used in managing the traumatic effects of the tragedy. I begin with a description of trauma experience as narrated to me by Peterson Ngije<sup>70</sup> and then a first-person account narration of Michael Kamau in their search for healing. I elected to use survivors’ personal narratives in this chapter because by allowing them to recount their own experiences of the tragedy, “...it validates the idea advanced by Janet<sup>71</sup> that the goal of therapy is to convert ‘traumatic memory’ into ‘narrative memory’ by getting the patient to recount her history” (Antz & Lambek, 1996: 120). Turning ‘narrative memory’ into stories is one of the prerequisites for trauma memory healing as will be discussed in what is to follow.

Part II of the chapter discusses the role of social support networks such as those provided by family and friends, victims’ associations and religion that were used to manage the traumatic

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<sup>70</sup> Personal interview, Nairobi, 22.11. 2011

<sup>71</sup> A Psychologist hailed by recent theorists of trauma as a pioneer in developing a fully-formulated mnemo-technology for the treatment of the trauma victim.

effects of the bombing. Here, I again, allow a narration of how the victims' association works with a view to revealing the nature of support it offers its members.

Lastly, Part III focuses on the role of performance and visual art in the healing process. The use of music for memory and healing in the aftermath of the tragedy is discussed, as is the role of film.

## **Part I: Trauma Memory and Psychotherapy**

There exist various versions of what constitutes trauma memory.<sup>72</sup> Whilst its precise definition is in contest, Caruth (1995:4) suggests that it is part of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and identifies key elements that have been generally agreed upon. That is, “there is a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes a form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts, or behaviours stemming from the event, along with numbing that may have begun during or after the experience, and possibly also increased arousal to (and avoidance of) stimuli recalling the event”. The victims of trauma memory are ordinarily unable to remember the incident but are haunted by dreams and nightmares during which the event replays itself and is perpetually re-experienced in a painful traumatic present. Additionally, the victims “suffer strange behaviours, unremitting pain, extraordinary physical sensations, and irrational fears as the consequence of the pathological-brain-mind-behaviour-body connections caused by traumatisation” (Ruden, 2011:1; Herman, 1992:37).

While there are limited studies in Africa of PTSD following terrorist attacks, findings of a study conducted by Operation Recovery (OR)<sup>73</sup> between the first and third months after the Nairobi terror attack, accords with the key characteristics discussed by Caruth (ibid). Their findings reveal that PTSD in Nairobi occurred in 35% of the victims whose symptoms altogether satisfied the criteria of PTSD. The characteristics included experiencing dreams of the bombing, sleeplessness, re-experiencing of the bombing, hyper-arousal, numbing, fear of

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72. The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (DSM) of the American Psychiatric Association (APA) considers ‘traumatic memory’ as part of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) that is characterised by a varied number of symptoms that could include obsessive reliving of the traumatic experience, in others the inability to remember it at all. Other symptoms they list include: depression, eating disorders, mood swings, voices in the head, sleep difficulties, sexual problems and so on.

73 Operation Recovery was part of the consortium offered the consultancy by USAID.



tall buildings and helplessness (Njenga *et. al.*, 2004). Their findings further revealed that the factors predisposing victims to PTSD in this particular tragedy included - but were not limited to - female gender, unmarried status, seeing the blast, injury and delayed recovery, not confiding in a friend or family, bereavement and financial difficulties since the blast.

The two case studies I present in this chapter include the victims constituting the 35% affected by trauma in the study undertaken by Operation Recovery in 1998. The two, Peterson Ngije and Joseph Kamau, indeed attended the OR Mental Health Crisis clinic that was devoted to victims of the blast. The symptoms of trauma affecting them accord with what is described by Njenga *et al* (ibid). I first report the survivors' personal experience of trauma below, then consider the manner in which counsellors help a patient work towards healing.

#### **4.1.1. Survivors' Perspectives**

##### **Peterson Ngije:<sup>74</sup> A Personal Experience of Trauma**

Peterson Ngije, then aged 49, had just alighted from a bus outside the Cooperative Bank Building on Haile Selassie Avenue and was on Aga Khan Walk heading towards Harambee Avenue when he heard something akin to a gun-shot. He thought there were robbers trying to raid the Cooperative Bank, or any other bank in the area and continued minding his own business, but within seconds, his world turned upside down. Suddenly, everything was engulfed in darkness; he only regained his consciousness later that day in a hospital ward at the Kenyatta National Hospital with cuts all over his body and a fractured leg. He also suffered neck, head and scrotal injuries that required corrective surgery. The surgery worsened his condition as it led to partial paralysis of the left side of his body; it also interfered with his manhood. The latter creates a lot of anxiety in him; he fears that his wife might run away or become unfaithful. This has occasionally made him beat her for coming home late. His nights are also traumatizing, many involving dreams in which he sees the bombing replay as if it were happening in real-time. He talks of waking up relieved to realize it was nothing but just another bad dream. Mr Ngije also suffers from nasal congestions and has to frequently step aside to blow his nose, a habit he finds discomfiting<sup>75</sup> and has made him avoid meetings. He has a phobia too, for any loud noise reminds him of the bombing,

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74. Story used with permission; identities changed to respect confidentiality.

75. As I interviewed him, he requested to step aside several times to clear his nasal passages.

thus, a tyre burst or the banging of doors especially while in a *matatu*<sup>76</sup> still scares him, making travelling in them torturous.

Prior to this incident, Mr Ngije was a businessman in Nairobi operating a hotel and supplementing his income working as a freelance audio-visual technologist. The income derived from these ventures enabled him to cater for his family. However, because of the injuries and ensuing medication costs, all his businesses collapsed. He was unable to educate his children through university. He faced the dilemma of whether to pay school fees and forego medication and vice versa; but his need for continued medical attention took precedence.

Ngije initially found it very hard to accept that he was indeed a victim of the bombing and kept on questioning why it happened. He resorted to alcohol to forget what happened but also as a way of coping with the trauma, this however made life more difficult for his health continued to deteriorate. He once fell into a ditch in his drunken state and sustained multiple injuries, including of his already ‘broken leg’ and was admitted to hospital again. This marked the turning point of his life; he stopped drinking, found religion and henceforth preoccupied himself with church activities. He realized that he was lucky to survive the tragedy; others died.

Mr Ngije attended the USAID-funded counselling sessions at the Amani Counselling Centre and Training Institute (ACCTI) but did not find the healing he sought as he was unable to afford bus fares to attend regular counselling sessions. He also considered the scheme unfair since counsellors were paid professional fees for their services yet the traumatized struggled on their own to make it to the venue.

He appreciates the importance of the Memorial Park in reminding victims and others of the tragedy and for providing them a venue to meet. In his view its presence will continue reminding generations to come of this tragedy and probably deter others from committing acts of terrorism. His only regret is that the survivors do not get any financial support from the Memorial Park management yet it generates income recounting their tragedy.

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76. Small mini-vans used as public transport vehicles in Kenya that are characterized by the conductor hitting its roof or door to beckon the driver to stop and let passengers on or off.

He forgave the terrorists believing they were misled by Osama bin Laden, the proclaimed leader of Al Qaeda, to target the wrong people. He traces the origins of terrorism - manifest in the current geopolitical and religious polarisation pitting Islam against Judaism, and Christianity – to the biblical story of Abraham.<sup>77</sup> Ngije avers that in order to understand terrorism one must be aware of its historical origins since its awareness absolves the present terrorists from their actions. Aspects relating to terrorism will be discussed in Chapter 6.

### **Joseph Chege Kamau: A Personal Experience<sup>78</sup>**

This is the story of Joseph Chege Kamau, then 49 years old, who worked at a restaurant located in Development House, a building opposite the then U.S. embassy.

“On 7<sup>th</sup> of August 1998, I reported to my place of work as usual at 9.00 am. I changed into my uniform and started my work in the dining at Mukawa Cafe, where I worked as a head waiter. I was serving a customer breakfast when I heard a big sound. The tray I carried flew out of my hands. The whole cafe was shaking, the building was shaking so violently, for a moment I thought it was an earthquake. Everything was in total confusion, pieces of glass were falling down. I fell down and could hear and feel people stumbling and stepping on me as they ran out of the cafe. I became unconscious and passed out. I do not know who took me out of the building,

When I came to consciousness, I was all in shock and trembling. I was treated for shock but did not know my ears, head and stomach were affected at the time. But when my condition worsened I kept on going to the hospital and I am still under medication. My head problems are more painful than all the others. I attended

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77. Jews are believed to be descendants of Abraham through Isaac with whom God made a covenant while the Arabs descended from Ishmael born of Abraham's relation with Hagar, a slave serving Sarai, Abraham's first wife. Ishmael was thrown into the desert in order not to inherit Abraham. Some people, like Peterson Ngije offers his own interpretation of this biblical story to trace terrorism to the hatred generated in the differences between the descendants of the two sons.

78. The story is not edited to avoid any misrepresentation of the feelings and the experience of the trauma it embeds. It is adopted from a real-life experience story told by Mr Kamau during one of the evaluation workshops to assess the success of the 'Crisis Mental Health Programme' offered to survivors by ACCTI.

Kenyatta National Hospital and Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) clinic before being referred to Amani and AMREF<sup>79</sup> where we are still receiving medical assistance.

When AMREF took me in, I was a battered man with no future ahead of him. The scenes, the pictures, the wailing, the memory of 7<sup>th</sup> of August was still fresh. I started the long road to recovery, which is still incomplete due to the present state of my mind, though, I am in better shape....

Allow me to thank Amani Counselling Centre who have also been of great help to us and especially in psychiatric cases. Like said earlier ...dizziness has never left me in peace ever since 7<sup>th</sup> of August, 98. Along with it comes 'head attacks', I call them 'head attacks' because they are not headaches that require Panadol,<sup>80</sup> but more sophisticated attention. When this arises, to my surprise they sometimes last up to ten days. .... It is in Amani that I found a counsellor who really understood the problems I have been facing in social life, at home and when I am lonely. I do not know what will happen to such problems when the programme is phased out because I have not had enough counselling sessions. It is my prayer here that it will extend. Surely, even if the programme is phasing out you cannot afford to leave people with no heads. I mean we have psychiatric problems and cannot do counselling to ourselves. This creates room for fear in me, uncertainty, frustration and anger.

Let me also thank ADRA<sup>81</sup> for the rehabilitation they have given to us ....in the form of the business workshop at Wida Hotel. These taught us how to depend on ourselves. Here I would like to state that sick people do not take care of themselves. They need attention. While I agree that most people can go about their daily lives, there are others who are still traumatised by the horrific scenes of the bomb, I being one. I am scared of loud voices, trains, aeroplanes and trucks.

Turning back to Amani, I would like to request them to allow me to have access to their counsellor in future because the time I am writing this letter, my home is not all well as my wife left me on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> of June 2001 and is not yet back. We have

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<sup>79</sup> African Medical Research Foundation.

<sup>80</sup> A common pain killer that is sold off the counter and requires no prescription.

<sup>81</sup> Adventist Development Relief Agency. They provided support in training and micro-enterprises development and granted small business loans to survivors.

been having misunderstandings since I started working after the bomb blast. When this happens, I always get back to sickness, head attacks, ulcers, my whole body gets sick. I then start feeling that I am backsliding.

In order to say a job well done, the United States should complete healing the victims and then “pull out” of the project. Most people I included have not fully recovered and still require medication. When they phase out in September they will still leave many scars not healed. The silent suffering Kenyans will be left hopelessly sick by a Government that came in like a good Samaritan to help the victims.

A disaster can befall anybody or any society, and people should be taught to sympathise instead of side-lining the affected, making them feel unwanted in society. Those of us who are here are members of one family joined together by a national disaster that affected us all Kenyans."

Before I return to elaborate on the effects of 'trauma memory' and their therapies, some of which were employed in addressing symptoms of PTSD in the victims of the Nairobi tragedy, I wish to reflect on Linenthal's (Sturken, 2002: 1143-1144) discussion of the effects of the 1995 terrorist bombing of Oklahoma City, USA. He “tells the story of the bombing aftermath as a tension of three conflicting narratives: the progressive narrative, in which the response to the bombing is characterized in terms of local pride and the American heartland; the redemptive narrative, through which religious concepts are deployed to evoke a transcendence and in which the bombing allowed people to find the best in themselves; and a toxic narrative, about the on-going and painful effects of the bombing that remain within the community.”

The categorization of trauma narratives by Linenthal offers a framework for understanding the effects of the 1998 Nairobi terror attack on its survivors. In this particular chapter, I find resonance in the 'toxic narrative' and 'redemptive narrative'; the former echoing the experiences of alcoholism, family separation and violence while the latter, with the attempts to find religion and adopting positive attitudes in life as narrated by the two survivors in our case study. The stories of many other victims of the bombing tragedy strikes resonance with what happened in Oklahoma City.

The stories of Ngije and Kamau recounted above resonate with other stories and experiences that are told across the city by many of the over 5,000 affected people. It is a story that tells of the suffering experienced by the survivors and their struggles to come to terms with it. The most traumatized of the Nairobi terror attack survivors are those who were directly exposed to the tragic event. Interviews with the survivors, including Messrs Ngije and Kamau, reveal that they were among hundreds of those who were physically rendered immobile and helpless – coming back to consciousness at the Kenyatta National Hospital - while trying to escape from the disaster. They have first-hand experiences of its sound, smells and images. They directly witnessed death and the disembowelling of persons, and their lives have been permanently altered by the dead or by injury of a loved one.

These narrative accounts present the common manifestations of traumatic memory experiences, including the following: anxiety, dreams reliving the bombing, phobia for tall buildings and noise, exploding blast especially unexpected, fear of breaking glass, loneliness, prolonged bouts of headache, feelings of hopelessness, unexplained anger, and lamentations. Besides these are cases of family instability, substance abuse and violence. It is indeed those who were affected in this significant way who experienced trauma memory with the repetitive reliving of the encounter reportedly common.

#### **4.1.2. Trauma Healing**

The repetitive reliving of the bomb attack, including the inherent trauma, can only be dealt with if the event from which it derives is interpreted and retold as a narrative. The process involves bringing traumatic memory back from their repressed storage – where they are often experienced as dreams, phobias, flashbacks or pain – to the conscious life in order to recreate the ‘narrative flow of history’. This is achieved through a reinterpretation of the traumatic past conjoined to the present to tell a meaningful story; “heretofore meaningless and troubling behaviours and experiences are stitched together to memories ..., and so one acquires a new past. Symptoms are regarded as symbols or encapsulated representations of actual events, and as time goes on they become the basis of fully discursive memories in which their meaning is at last made clear” (Antze & Lambek, 1996:161). In discussing trauma memory victims of the Nairobi terror attack, it is acknowledged that the performances

at the Memorial Park, the experiences the survivors share, the music and films performed and watched respectively, are all efforts towards narration of the tragedy. Caruth (ibid: 153) warns ... “the transformation of trauma into a narrative memory that allows the story to be verbalized and communicated, to be integrated into one’s own, and others’, knowledge of the past, may lose both the precision and the force that characterises traumatic recall.” Converting a traumatic event into narrative memory carries the risk of distortion or forgetting certain elements since the victims are likely to tell only that which they find comfortable. Ruden (2011) offers an alternative way, suggesting that the traumatic memories encoded already in the brain – with a perceived impossibility of processing the emotion-generating event – can be made possible through decoding. He steers away from commonly applied trauma therapies like psychotherapy<sup>82</sup> and psycho-pharmacology;<sup>83</sup> instead he articulates a psycho-sensory<sup>84</sup> approach based on *havening*<sup>85</sup> as a means of decoding traumatic memory, and for therapy. While it is not appropriate in this study to delve into the detailed workings of these approaches, I note that a mix of approaches is being used in attending to the traumatic victims of the bombing tragedy experience. My discussion of the healing power provided by performing and visual arts, a central aspect of this study, mirrors some aspects of Ruden’s *psycho-sensory* approaches.

A disaster of the magnitude of the terror attack psychologically traumatizes far and wide, hence calling for concerted efforts of institutions and individuals qualified in mental health management programmes. An initial effort at trauma management took the form of religious comfort and counselling offered by a loose coalition of religious counsellors bringing together the All Saints Cathedral, Holy Family Basilica, Nairobi Baptist Church and St Andrews Church under its ‘Beyond the Disaster Counselling Programme’. This study did not find any documentation showing the efficacy of this programme, though many of those who attended the prayer and counselling sessions affirmed their healing nature. Meanwhile, the Kenya Medical Association (KMA) took control of the coordination of professional services under the banner of ‘Operation Recovery’ (OR). They engaged in an awareness campaign to highlight the psychological effects of the bomb on the population and debriefed them.

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82Using language or conversation to engender and alter certain responses to memory in traumatized people.

83The use of chemicals (drugs) to change mood, sensation, thinking and behaviour of a traumatized person.

84. An approach that utilizes the various forms of sensory triggers to alter brain response. The five sensory senses are implied.

85. Trauma-treatment focused on ‘touching’ as a means to activate the emotional components of an emotional event.

Debriefing, documentation, counselling, and psychological treatment were commenced with each component coordinated by a different organization.<sup>86</sup> Various local institutions provided financial support for these programmes before USAID stepped in by way of a five-year package of assistance totalling \$42.3 million allocated by the U.S. Congress between 1998 and 2003. A small proportion totalling \$2.8 million<sup>87</sup> was allocated for medical treatment and care for those who sustained injuries and to rehabilitate small business ventures directly destroyed by the bombing; an amount not available to provide for the survivors' post-hospitalization medication. By this time, the survivors were in the process of recovery.

To offer long-term recovery support in a more coordinated way, USAID solicited proposals from leading mental health agencies in Nairobi for the completion of this programme. In 2000, ACCTI was awarded a two-year contract to sustain its implementation.

The goal of this programme as set out by ACCTI was “to provide mental health assistance to people affected by the bomb on 7<sup>th</sup> August 1998 and to enable them to cope with the effects of the disaster” (ACCTI, 2002). To realize this goal, four objectives were set: to ensure people affected by the bomb have access to mental health services; to provide knowledge, skills and attitude change regarding the psychological management of disaster trauma; to reach out to survivors and their families to create awareness and sensitivity about Crisis Mental Health; and to develop a comprehensive research and documentation programme for all internal and external documents with statistical reporting. The programme identified four target groups: primary victims - people directly hit by the bomb blast; the bereaved – people whose relatives died in the blast; rescue workers – people who participated in rescuing the injured and recovering the bodies; and community members – people who lived or worked near the bomb blast site.

This study identified objectives one and three that aimed at - ensuring people affected by the bombing have access to mental health services; and reaching out to survivors and their families to create awareness and sensitivity about Crisis Mental Health - most applicable to its research goals. These are relevant to my analysis of traumatic memory healing emanating

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86. Kenya Red Cross sub contracted the components to implementing partners such as Neema Counselling and Training Centre, Oasis Counselling and Training Centre, Lifespring Counselling and Training Centre, and Nairobi Psychotherapy Services and Institute.

87. A U.S. response factsheet to a special report in the Sunday Nation, March 21<sup>st</sup> 1999 regarding U.S. government response to the August 7th bombing.



from the bombing for they deal directly with the survivors and their families while objectives two and four pertain to training of mental health providers, documentation and publishing of the Crisis Mental Health Programme respectively.

The success achieved under objective one indicates that 1,937 bereaved and rescue workers were counselled against a target of 900 persons; psychiatric treatment was provided to 212 affected adult-survivors with severe psychological disorders against a target of 142; 1687 child-survivors were counselled against a target of 300; and 38 clinical supervisory meetings held against a target of 48. Betty Munge,<sup>88</sup> a therapist at ACCTI explained that their intervention entailed having one-on-one personal therapy sessions with the ‘patients’ or by putting them in smaller groups, of between four and six persons, in which the ‘patients’ are provided with an environment that encourages them to dialogue, cultivate trust and open up in sharing their experiences of traumatic memory. Oral narratives, drawing and writing are also encouraged. Therapists guide them to become positive in their thinking by accepting the reality of the bombing and learn to accommodate some of its effects – loss of sight, physical disability, loss of income, and so on – in their life.

The achievements realized under ACCTI’s objective three focussed on outreach programmes. Statistics indicate that 1349 child-survivors, 1123 adult-survivors living in Nairobi and the surrounding environs, 529 families living upcountry, and 209 permanently or seriously injured survivors were helped against a target of 1500, 1260, 300 and 300 respectively. In addition, 8 family- cum-children’s events and 10 community meetings were conducted as planned. Sixty-one audio-visual programmes each lasting between 30 and 45 minutes were broadcast by radio and television stations with national outreach, while 7950 posters and 8000 pamphlets were printed and distributed meeting the set targets. Most of the targets were not just successfully met but exceeded.

Of interest to this study is the form taken by these psychotherapy programmes, particularly as concerns community and children’s events as well as the audio-visual media outreach. They employed dance performance, recital of poetry, puppetry, and story-telling that helped the survivors reconnect their emotions to the tragedy leading to a recounting of their trauma. Sharing of traumatic memories enables the survivors to integrate the trauma in their personal

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88. Personal interview, Nairobi, 10.10.2011.

lives making it more present and more real. This supports the argument in this study that performance and visual art are important in helping the bereaved come to terms with tragic loss (Winter 1995). This position is further supported by Van der Kolk's (2002: 8) observation that until the advent of modern psychological treatments and psychopharmaceuticals, many societies made use of theatre and ritual, *and visual art*<sup>89</sup> to deal with communal trauma.

In view of the large numbers of people affected by this tragedy, it is difficult to accurately state the impact of the Crisis Mental Health Programme, though anecdotal reports during ACCTI workshops indicated positive changes of attitude. There were both short-term gains with immediate results and more gradual recovery. The success of the ACCTI programme is corroborated by the testimonies of Messrs Ngije and Kamau in the preceding pages, both mention the positive therapy received from ACCTI.

## **Part II: Social Support Networks**

Noting that hundreds, if not thousands of others, were not able to attend the counselling and psychotherapy sessions offered by ACCTI on a regular basis, what alternatives did this group have? I cite an argument advanced by Alfred Kibunja<sup>90</sup> which suggests that in a context where a mass of individuals and communities have experienced trauma – such as in the case of the 1998 Nairobi terror attack – and where one-on-one counselling is practically impossible, traditional forms of healing are applied. He argues that there exist traditions and cultures of healing in traditional African societies that are based on an extensive network of kinship and social relations which have been passed on from generation to generation. This observation is supported by Watters (2010), an American psychologist who develops an argument that help us understand what constitutes African understanding of trauma. He posits that the biomedical model of trauma-healing – that we seem quick at adapting – is embedded in assumptions of Western culture and, therefore, not culturally neutral as its proponents would want the world to believe as it fails to understand other cultural contexts of managing mental health. In a comparative study of schizophrenia, Watters (ibid) and his team were

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89. Emphasis is mine.

90. Chairman of the Kenya Counsellors Association.

curious to find out why people in non-Western societies seemed to recover better. His findings<sup>91</sup> validated a widely held belief that besides the strong bonds of family and kinship, access to a variety of socially accepted interventions aided the healing process. This finding supports my proposition that it is critical that trauma memory victims are assisted to re-establish contact with their existing social support systems that are not only found in bonds of kinship relations, but victims associations and religious affiliations. I now turn to discuss the latter two in the context of the victims of the bombing tragedy.

Religion is the other network that this study identified as being vital in providing closure to traumatic memory. Testimonies of those interviewed in this study revealed a number of people who claim to have managed the pain and trauma effected by the bombing through God's grace and fellowship of the church. Others like Ngije decided to find religion to justify the tragedy as having been willed by God to prepare him for a better life in the future; the thirteenth commemorative event, which I described in Chapter 3, witnessed testimonies by some survivors like Rahab Kamau (see page 89) of what God had done for them, and so on, and on. Many survivors subscribed to this therapeutic benefit derived from religion, in this case Christianity.<sup>92</sup> This observation is supported by findings of a study undertaken by Zang *et al* (2013:202) on the post-disaster psychiatric disorders in the aftermath of the Nairobi U.S. embassy bombing. The study revealed that, “while religion does not necessarily play an important role in post disaster coping in every population, in Nairobi, however, even though religious coping was not the most common method of coping, it was rated as the most helpful method in this population that characterized itself as Christian and frequently church-going”. Seeking solace in religion, as discussed above, accords with the ‘redemptive narratives’ of trauma-healing referred to by Linenthal (Sturken, 2002) as it assists the traumatized to find meaning in an event that threatened the foundations of their belief. As a predominantly Christian nation, the death of many innocent Kenyan victims through the bombing indeed made some survivors question the existence of ‘an all-caring God’ who could allow such a terrible incident to be visited upon his faithful.

Interviews with survivors of the bombing tragedy discussed in this chapter support the important role played by kinship and other social networks in providing healing to the

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91. Findings published in "The Crazy Like Us: The Globalization of the American Psyche. Published online by the Free Press. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/10/magazine/10psyche-hm?>

92 Njenga *et al* (2004) study found out that 96% of those he interviewed professed Christianity.

traumatized. In my previous chapter, I described what I termed as 'family memorialisation' and their importance in bringing family together in a kinship context reinforcing memory and healing. The speeches and performances, especially the drama, during the thirteenth commemoration also make references to the supportive roles of the family and other social relations in trauma. The formation of an association for the survivors, as discussed below, provides further elaboration of how such social networks contribute to the management of traumatic events.

The survivors found it necessary to form an association to advocate for continued assistance and care of those who still needed long-term treatment beyond the funded period. This association would not only cater for mental health cases but address wider issues affecting the survivors and families of the bereaved. One such association is the August Seventh Bomb-blast Victims Association (ASBVA), formed as an umbrella-body to represent all the survivors and families of the bereaved. Has the association been of assistance to the survivors? What role does it play in helping its members cope with the tragedy? The following section examines the role of this association in the context of these questions.

#### **4.2.1. The August Seventh Bomb-blast Victims Association (ASBVA)**

The events of August 7<sup>th</sup> 1998 bombing are vividly remembered by survivors of the Nairobi terror attack and the same could be said of many other Kenyans. Being remembered by many people implies that shared collective memories, as observed by Halbwachs (1992), have a remarkable capacity to create a sense of unity or 'oneness' among people who would otherwise have no meaningful sense of kinship. This fittingly applies to the atrocious attacks of August 7<sup>th</sup> 1998. It brought together otherwise unconnected persons sharing the traumatic experience to seek one another out and develop a fellowship on the strength of this common tie that is akin to 'spiritual kinship' (Erikson, 1995). This unity enables them to exchange and share experiences, including suffering, in ways that help them to heal together as family and lessens their individual trauma. This is best illustrated by Pamela Githaiga's experience here below.

'On Friday August 7<sup>th</sup> 1998, I was expecting to be discharged from Matter Hospital after successfully delivering my baby. My husband, Lawrence Githaiga, who worked

as a Clerical Officer in Ufundi Cooperative Society visited me at around 10 .00 am but could not discharge me from hospital as he did not have enough money due to an on-going bankers strike. He left for his office promising to come back as soon as he succeeded since the bankers strike was expected to end that day. About half an hour after he left, I heard a blast but did not pay any particular attention immediately until it was televised on news shortly afterwards. Other than the U.S. embassy building, the bomb affected other buildings within its precincts with fatalities and injuries being reported. I then felt a cold chill go up my spine as I knew my husband, who worked in Ufundi Cooperative Building - sandwiched between the embassy and Cooperative Bank - must have reached town, and could have become a victim. No sooner than this realization hit me, everything went blank and mute. I could not even construct an image of him until four days later when we found his body in the City Mortuary.

I was overwhelmed by shock and grief; it took me a while to accept that I indeed had lost my husband. Friends and relatives assisted in making the burial arrangements as I was still too weak. Even before the funeral, my in-laws started making demands of one nature or another. They came to my house and demanded anything that belonged to him including furniture and any money I could have received from the Njonjo Commission<sup>93</sup> to assist in the funeral arrangement. Six months after my husband's death and funeral, this relationship deteriorated further to the extent that I abandoned my matrimonial home.

I lost my casual job with an Asian Factory in the Industrial Area and started life anew without any support from my in-laws. I enrolled for driving lessons under the vocational training programme funded by USAID with hopes that I would get employment as a driver upon completion. This was, however, not to be since most employers could only engage experienced drivers. I thereafter enrolled for hairdressing lessons and on completion opened a salon whose income I currently depend on.

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<sup>93</sup> A national commission was set up by the President to coordinate the management of the disaster and its aftermath including assisting the victims' families and survivors.

Though my kids were young when their father died, I explained to them the circumstances of his death and occasionally took them to the Memorial Park when they were young. The first time they went, it is the kids who went to the memorial wall in search of his name and on identifying it stood there gazing at it before kneeling down to pray for his soul. The kids are now teenagers and have made it a routine to visit the park during the annual commemoration for they find solace in so doing. The Memorial Park affords me and my children the opportunity to remember their father. I find it important for the names to remain in the Memorial Park to remind future generations of those who died as a result of the bombing. My faith in Christ assures me that we will reunite in heaven.

I always felt lonely, isolated and depressed in the years following Lawrence's death and more so after the disagreements with my brothers - and sisters- in- law. I therefore decided to join both the Association for Widows and the Injured (AWI) and ASBVA. AWI has particularly been very helpful in helping us cope with the trauma of losing our dear ones. We initially met on a monthly basis but the span of meetings has widened. Our meetings made us forget the pain and suffering we were going through as we sang, joked, danced and visited each other for encouragement. Singing and dancing made me feel happy. We also used these meetings to share skills and experiences that helped us start money-generating enterprises. I have, for instance, successfully taught hair-plaiting to two fellow widows in my group who now operate a hair salon in the same vicinity.

My participation in ASBVA has however become infrequent since its hope for getting compensation for its members from the US government continues to fade by the day. These meetings have become mere talk-shops with no tangible results to show.'

In the aftermath of the 1998 bombing, many associations were formed to represent the interest of the Kenyan victims and help their families cope with multiple hardships - physical, emotional, mental, and financial – manifested differently. One such is the August Seventh Bomb-blast Victims Association formed in 2001 to collectively address the interests of all the survivors. The initiative to form the association was first mooted by the survivors on realization that the five-year funding period offered to them by the U.S. Congress for

medication, and social rehabilitation was fast approaching its end. Many beneficiaries were, however, still sick and required continuous medical attention; others had already lost their means of livelihood. In addition, compensation for the injuries sustained was not forthcoming. This scenario forced them to form an association to pressure the U.S. and Kenyan governments for renewed funding for this programme and to be compensated. It also aimed at approaching other organizations with altruistic intent to come to their aid. However, the U.S. government was emphatic that no additional funding would be granted and instead suggested that the victims seek support from their own government.<sup>94</sup> Though the Kenyan government has been full of promises to assist the victims to get compensation from the U.S. government through diplomatic channels, this has only been rhetorical, as no demonstrable efforts have been witnessed.

The association has, however, been instrumental in keeping the memory of the tragedy alive and in providing a platform for collective healing. The annual commemorations at the Memorial Park have since 2002 been organized and supported by members of the association with occasional help from well-wishers. It is only during the first, fifth,<sup>95</sup> and tenth<sup>96</sup> anniversaries that the government was involved because President Moi and Prime Minister Raila Odinga presided over these particular annual commemorations. The speeches they made on these occasions reinforced the government's view that the tragedy was a national tragedy to be remembered and commuted to national collective memory.

The significance of the tenth anniversary is underscored by the fact that 2008 is the year that Kenya almost descended into a civil war, following the disputed presidential election results of December 2007. The performances through dance, song and poetry, extolling the virtues of peace and unity at a time the country was still recovering from the effects of the post-election violence was timely, if ironic. It is through collective acts of commemoration of tragedies, such as the 1998 bombing, that the country is stimulated to reflect on its other recent tragedies. To paraphrase Halbwachs (1992), it is the failure to remember such collective acts

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94. See letter from U.S. Ambassador in Appendix 3.

95. The fifth anniversary was deemed important because it coincided with the official opening of the Memorial Park's Documentation Centre that President Moi had supported through a public-fundraising event.

96. The American government was drawing a curtain over its support and involvement in anything to do with the tragedy on its tenth anniversary. They invited the Right Hon. Prime Minister with a view to informing the Kenyan government to continue from where they had reached. This was reflected in the statements they made and in later communication to his office.

through performances that tragedies easily get forgotten, especially if it pertains to violence such as the one experienced in 2008.

The first few years following the formation of the association, its members met every Saturday at the Memorial Park to discuss ways to alleviate the physical, emotional and financial challenges they faced. In these meetings, they shared their tribulations and encouraged each other to remain strong and hopeful for the future. These meetings identified corporate organizations and individuals in Kenya to be approached for assistance regarding their medication, school fees needs, counselling and sources to be approached for loans for business ventures. No significant positive responses have been received from the identified organizations because they assumed many of them had already benefitted from the much acclaimed financial support from the U.S. government through USAID. Notwithstanding these deficiencies, the association plays a vital role in aiding the healing process through these weekly meetings. The frequency of these meetings has since decreased but a few active members continue to meet. The choice of the Memorial Park as their meeting venue is significant because it enables them to express their collective and shared knowledge of the bombing on which their sense of unity and individuality is based (Winter, 1995).

The association, registered in 2001 with over 1000 members, has witnessed a decline in membership to 358, most of them now not active. Arguably, at the time of its formation many survivors were recuperating and needed emotional, social and financial support, which the association sought to offer. However, with psychotherapy, spiritual counselling and other social programmes offered by ACCTI and other organizations<sup>97</sup> impacting positively, many opted out. This decline is also partly attributable to leadership wrangles in the association taking an ethnic dimension<sup>98</sup> and hence disillusioning its membership. While membership of the association transcends ethnic categorization, ethnic identity remains a divisive issue in its leadership. The association is currently preoccupied pursuing reparations from the U.S. government's Department of Justice; the recent ruling by Judge John Bates,<sup>99</sup> a Washington Federal Judge, rekindled their hopes for compensation. He directed that families of those who

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97. Among these was Adventist Development Relief Agency (ADRA), which provided support in training and micro-enterprises development and granted small business loans to survivors.

98. Issues of ethnicity and national identity is the subject of discussion in chapter 5.

99. 'US Court Ruling Links Iran to Al Qaeda'. *The Iran Primer, United States Institute of Peace, Dec. 13, 2011.*



died in the embassy bombing be compensated by Iran and Sudan for their culpability in supporting the 1998 Nairobi terror attack.

The association solicited support of the government of Kenya in this quest for compensation without any success. Their hopes of getting compensation, in my view, is the only glue holding the association together, without which its operations are likely to cease.

## **Part III: Performance and Visual Art**

### **4.3.1. Music as Therapy**

“Music connected me to the emotions of the day. It did in a way that no other art form can do (for me). It didn’t create the emotion, but it seemed to act as a conduit; a way to process fact and funnel it into feelings. Somehow, as a passionate music lover, I’d forgotten how powerful music can be”.

The above statement by Bolen<sup>100</sup> (2011) reminiscing on the music selection he played in the aftermath of September 11 on NP Radio in the US, supports the widely-held notion of the therapeutic power of music in ameliorating trauma experiences after a tragic event. In Kenya too, music was used to promote healing after the 1998 bomb blast tragedy.

In the aftermath of August 7<sup>th</sup> 1998, music played an important role in the healing process as was demonstrated by the number of musical events that were organized with a view to helping people deal with some of the difficult emotions that arose at the time. From the singing of the national anthem – with its emphasis on peace, unity and patriotism – to special compositions dedicated to the victims of the tragedy, and fundraising concerts to help families of the victims and the survivors, music became one of the important therapies being employed to manage trauma. In the numerous ceremonies and services held to honour people who were killed or injured in the bombing, both individually and collectively, music was always played.

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<sup>100</sup> Bob Bolen, one of the persons responsible for National Public Radio (U.S.) programmes reflecting on his considerations for selection of music he used in his programme on the day of the September 11 bombing in the United States.

There were many musical compositions by Kenyan artists paying tribute to the victims and survivors, including: Mary Wambui's gospel number '*Lazima tuwe kama watoto*' offering encouragement to the survivors; Glamour Girls' '*Rose Wanjiku Mwangi*' dedicated to Rose's fortitude for holding on for 40 hours although eventually dying before getting rescued; 'Them Mushrooms' '*Twalia Bomb Blast*', Masinga Boys Bands '*Bomu ya Nairobi*', Epha Maina's '*Bomb tragedy*' decrying the loss of life emanated by the terrorist attack; and David Jomeli's '*Sometimes I wonder*' questioning the reasons for the bombing. The songs reflect the collective narratives generated by the tragedy as then held by many Kenyans. Notwithstanding their musical categorization, these songs encouraged tolerance, empathy and recovery, perhaps in recognition of the therapeutic power of music.

The 'Pamoja<sup>101</sup> Concert' of 1999 was the culmination of efforts by different musicians to bring healing to the tragedy through music. OR in conjunction with Kenyan and international music promoters organized a concert to commemorate the first anniversary of the 1998 bombing. The concert brought together all leading Kenyan musicians, local and foreign-based,<sup>102</sup> for a celebration of solidarity and unity to heal the nation after the tragedy. The highlight of the concert was the joint performance of the concert theme-song '*Pamoja as One*' composed, arranged and produced by Pete Odera<sup>103</sup> for the occasion. Its lyrics and arrangement follow:

*Mungu Baba, twakuomba/ Iangalie Kenya tena, utuonye mioyoni / Our Father, hear our cry once more / Help us heal as we pray, as we knock on heaven's door*

*Help us see a brighter day, helps us see a better way/ teach us not to be divided, heal our hearts make us united*

*//Chorus//*

*Pamoja as one, we stand hand in hand together / Pamoja as one, you and I, if we try, we can build a better land /We can build a better land*

*//Verse//*

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101. Swahili word for 'togetherness'.

102. Leading foreign-based musicians in attendance included Sweden-based Swahili Nation, Eric Wanaina, Harrison Ngunjiri aka 'Roughtone', and Jabali Africa.

103. Reproduced with the artist's permission. Pete is one of Kenya's leading gospel musicians; he was assisted by Susan Onyungu in writing this song.

*Ndugu yangu, damu yakonami yangu /Rangi yake ni nyekundu, kulaumu kwanini?/*

*Oh my brother, why let anger grow and grow? / Forgive the past and let go, it will bring healing, don't you know?*

*//Channel//*

*Help us see a brighter day/ help us see a better way / we have got to stop this fighting/ heal our hearts make us united*

*//Chorus//*

*Pamoja, pamoja, pamoja weh....//*

The song encapsulates Kenya's disposition one year into the tragic bombing. Unity, forgiveness, healing and hope for a bright future are what all yearned for. The wordings repeated in the chorus throughout the song in a powerful way, evokes John Austin's (1975) theory of speech acts where language has the efficacy of performing an action. Those who attended indeed found healing in the musical performances.

According to Paul Okumu, Operations Recovery Communications Manager,<sup>104</sup> the *Pamoja* team brought together music cutting across family, hip-hop, *benga*, reggae, *chakacha* and rap as a reflection of the unity and compassion shown after the tragic August 7<sup>th</sup> terrorist bomb blast. The selection of music and groups was intended to go beyond any tribal and political connotations, as demonstrated during the rescue itself.

More than 10,000 people attended the concert at the Kenyatta International Conference Centre grounds in Nairobi, the bomb blast survivors included. Music, it can be asserted, helped people deal with the difficult emotions pertaining to this tragedy, it ameliorates stress by allowing the participants (read survivors) to ventilate their inner feelings and pain hence coming to terms with their suffering. All the proceeds from the concert were committed to assist the survivors that were still in need of urgent medication.

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104. Quoted in *East African Standard* 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1999.

### 4.3.2. Use of Film in Mediating Trauma

In the last section of the Documentation Centre's exhibition gallery is a small room devoted to screening of films and documentaries relating to the 1998 bombing. These documentaries complement what is on display illustrating other equally important dimensions of the tragedy not explored in the museum. The Park's management informed me<sup>105</sup> that only three films have been screened in the exhibition space since its opening in 2004.

The film, 'Seconds from Disaster', is part of an American documentary television series produced by the National Geographic investigating historically relevant man-made and natural disasters in different parts of the world. The one focussed on Nairobi re-enacts the events of the bombing in 1998, presenting the events in chronological order and analysing the causes and circumstances that ultimately affected the tragedy. The film uses re-enactments, interviews, testimonials and advanced computer simulations to recreate the sequence of events up to the last second of the disaster.

The second documentary 'True Terror' mirrors 'Seconds from Disaster' in simulating the sombre mood of the event. This three-part chronicle film starts by painting a busy, chaotic, and crowded cityscape then followed by a simulation of the bombing and the chaotic scenes that followed. The second part focuses on the rescue efforts of both amateur Kenyan and professionals flown in to help before a presentation of emotionally-moving survivor-stories including that of Douglas Sidialo, an ambitious sales executive blinded by the blast. One denominator shared by these two films is their focus on the actual bombing itself.

Wanuri Kahiu's 'From a Whisper' shifts its focus from the terrorist bombing itself to a realistic story of families coping with trauma. The film is centred on Tamani, a young girl in pursuit of the truth regarding the fate of her mother, Joyce Kezio, whom she is told by her dad, Sam, went missing in the aftermath of the bombing. That particular morning, the trio of dad, mum and daughter were in town; Joyce leaves Tamani with her dad in the car waiting as she enters a building next to the American embassy shortly before the bomb explosion. While disembarking from the car, she draws a heart-shaped image on their car's side window to express her love for Tamani; an image that remains etched in her memory. In her efforts to

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105. Personal communication with Lydia Gatwiri, Nairobi, 12<sup>th</sup> April 2011.

come to terms with her mother's disappearance, she deploys this image and starts spray-painting heart-shaped artworks and graffiti on the walls of the Memorial Park whenever she sneaked in. She signs the pieces, JK, her mother's initials. Meanwhile her father plans sending Tamani against her will to the US to stay with her auntie rather than continue her artwork, which he feels constitutes wasting her life doing nothing meaningful.<sup>106</sup>

Complaints of graffiti paintings – here considered as dirt - in and around the Park are reported to Abu, a police officer responsible for this area. Incidentally, Abu was aware of the paintings and had introduced them to his wife who developed a liking for them and had christened the artworks 'heart pieces'. Instead of confronting Tamani for littering the park with graffiti, Abu becomes interested in her story.



Fig.4.1: One of Tamani's Heart Pieces.  
Adopted from the film *'From a Whisper'*.

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106. Art is considered an extra curriculum activity in Kenyan public schools. Many parents therefore discourage their children from it instead preferring science-based subjects. Sam's view is probably informed by this perspective.

The bombing equally traumatized Abu; one of the main perpetrators, Fareed, was a family friend. Interested in Tamani's story, Abu searches the police records to find out the names of those who were reported and confirmed missing after the bombing tragedy. To his dismay, in the obituaries of the period, Abu discovers JK or Joyce Kezia was indeed one of the victims whose body was rightfully identified and buried. Abu shares this news with Tamani who on learning the truth confronts her father. Remorseful for having lied, he confesses hiding this truth thinking Tamani was too young to understand. This revelation does not make him rescind plans of sending her to the U.S. She shares her imminent departure to the U.S with Abu who advises her to request the father that on the day of departure, they first go to the Memorial Park en route to the airport. On the relevant day, the Memorial Park grounds are filled with red 'heart pieces' and some of Tamani's paintings.

Tamani's artworks and the Memorial Park monuments takes Sam on a roller-coaster ride of emotions conjuring up memories of the life he shared with Kezia, the tragic event, and the enduring lie he told his daughter. The truth that his wife is truly gone confronts him at the Memorial Park, enabling him to discuss the bombing for the first time with Tamani in a family context. The discussion provides them with a chance to construct a family narrative of the loss. Integrated into their personal lives, the narrative makes the amelioration of their traumatic memory possible. It is through the acceptance of this new narrative that Sam acquiesces in Tamani's request to remain at home.

As I conclude this section focusing on films and documentaries, I find it necessary to draw the following conclusions. In the first two films, 'True Terror' and 'Seconds to Disaster', emphasis is laid on re-enactment and simulation of what could have actually transpired during the bombing. These techniques enable the illustration of acts that would have otherwise gone unseen or be deemed unbelievable. As Walker (1997:809) asserts, "they aim to fill with pictures the void created by the real impossibility to resurrect memory as shared and validated history". By watching these documentaries, those who lost relatives and friends to the bombing are able to reconstruct imaginatively what their loved ones could have gone through completing the narratives they had formed of the tragedy. In so doing, they are able to 'work through' their trauma by forming and relating an almost accurate scenario of what occurred. Repeatedly, these documentaries assist the traumatized to process the trauma into narrative form and hence provide a framework for healing. This view is corroborated by

Penina Syokau's<sup>107</sup> testament of deriving her healing from watching documentaries of the bombing.

Observations made in the Documentation Centre and confirmed by the centre's curator corroborate the popularity of the films. Rarely does one find the corner where these films are screened empty, implying the desire by its visitors to learn more about what transpired on that morning in 1998. The reactions of the visitors vary, while others seem totally unmoved; a number come out in a sombre mood or even shed mournful tears. On interrogating one of the visitors<sup>108</sup> as to why she was crying, she informed me that she was then a student at the Blanes Secretarial College in Ufundi House, which collapsed as a result of the bombing killing some of her classmates. Watching the film 'Seconds from Disaster', provides her with a site of mourning as she is able to see the building in which they died. It brings back the memories in such a powerful way that that she is able to see her classmates in what would have been their usual sitting arrangements. Having interviewed her on the occasion of the 14<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the bombing, led me to the conclusion that besides the monuments of the Memorial Park and the commemorative ceremony itself, the film becomes a site of memory in as far as it permits mourning to take place. Completing the mourning process is a prerequisite to attaining healing.

#### **Part IV: Conclusion**

I started this chapter with narrations of personal experience of trauma as experienced by two of its survivors. Giving them a voice to narrate how they experienced the bombing and the effect it had - or is still having - on their lives enables us to appreciate the gravity of the matter at hand and, more so, the trauma it engendered. The victims with non-physical injuries are not normally put high in the list of those to be prioritized for treatment when tragedies of such a magnitude occur. This is perhaps explained by the lack of adequate research on the effects of disasters on mental health in Africa despite the frequency and severity of disasters in the continent (Zheng *et.al*, 2012). It is precisely for this reason that many of the survivors of the bombing were left to their own thus aggravating their suffering. The chapter then proceeded to describe the characteristics of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, one of the mental

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<sup>107</sup> Not real name. *East African*, August 2-8 1999.

<sup>108</sup> Personal Interview of Bernice Kechem, Nairobi 7<sup>th</sup> August, 2012.

health conditions experienced by the survivors before reverting to the therapies that were used in their management.

The key argument presented in this chapter is that performing and visual art have played a vital role in the management of trauma engendered by the bombing tragedy. Performances during commemorative anniversaries, against the backdrop of the Memorial Park monuments, help the victims to recall and relate their experiences in the group, leading to an acceptance of the implications of the tragedy that indeed happened. This is best illustrated in the way the survivors reacted to the dance and songs, poetry and drama performed during the annual commemorative events. In addition, musical compositions in the aftermath of the tragedy arguably provided therapy to a then-wounded nation. These compositions in different languages and genres of music – from Luo to Kikuyu, Giriama to Akamba, from reggae to rap, *benga* to hip-hop – indicate a healing desire for the nation. The formation of an association by the survivors and the holding of meetings on a regular basis - especially immediately after the tragedy - provided them with a platform to develop a fellowship based on the strength of this common tie. In their meetings, they narrate their stories, their experiences of trauma and coping strategies. Telling the story of trauma in depth and in detail, as was demonstrated in this chapter, transforms the ‘traumatic memory’ – which is wordless – into words, so that it can be integrated into the survivor’s life story (Herman, 1992: 175). By remembering and telling the truth about the terrible events of this tragedy, they become prerequisites for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of individual victims. While narration and the sharing of experiences of trauma, referred to in this study, does not constitute the rubric of visual and performing art, it is nevertheless one of the processes that support the efforts towards the provision of closure. The passage of time since the event of the tragedy has seen a decline in the frequency of the meetings of the association, an indication that some of the traumatic effects experienced by the victims have by now healed or diminished.

Caruth (1995) suggests that full recovery is achieved when survivors no longer suffer the appearance of traumatic memories in the form of flashbacks, hallucinations and behavioural re-enactments. Instead, those formerly afflicted are able to form a narrative of what happened placing their experience within an autobiographical history. The findings of this study indicate that considerable distance has been travelled in the journey towards recovery and



traumatic healing in the aftermath of the 1998 bombing tragedy. In summary, a multiplicity of tools such as *psycho-sensory* approaches, a survivor's association, repeatedly watching of films and listening to music have contributed to making all those affected traverse significant distances in the journey towards recovery. The performances during the annual commemorative events, including those organized at the family level, and the Documentation Centre's programmes, including the exhibition and the Memorial Park monuments have been equally helpful. And true to this, the testimonies by the survivors' support the argument of this thesis that visual and performing art have contributed towards the healing of trauma experienced in the aftermath of the 1998 Nairobi terror attack.

## Chapter 5: Ethnicity and Identity

### 5.0: Introduction

Chapter 5 takes the discussion of identity introduced in chapter 1 beyond the ‘fictive kin groups’ formed as a result of the terror attack to consider in detail the ethnic and national projections engendered by this event. Whilst the aftermath of the terror attack stimulated ‘nationalistic’ feelings of unity, it is suggested that this was just a short-lived ‘spur of the moment’ feeling that any attack of similar magnitude would have provoked elsewhere, as it did in the United States immediately after the September 11 attacks (Sturken, 2007). Soon thereafter, the political aspects of ethnicity reared its ugly head as was expressed during the process of rescue. If ethnicity could be articulated in an event as tragic as this, then it is arguable that politically-motivated ethnicity pervades many facets of Kenyan life; hence the necessity to devote attention to it in this dissertation.

This chapter is divided into three parts: Colonialism, Ethnicity and Independence; Challenges of Nationhood: Ethnicity, State Control and National Identity; and Peace, Reconciliation and projections of National Identity. This division enables a detailed examination, in Part I, of the origins of negative aspects of ethnicity in Kenya. I specifically look at the divide-and-rule tactics employed by the British colonists to subjugate their subjects as having played a significant part in raising consciousness of existing differences among the local communities. This becomes more manifest as the struggle for independence is presented as a Kikuyu-only affair to the exclusion of other communities that equally contributed in significant ways. Part II focuses on the development and entrenchment of politicised ethnicity by the three Kenyan post-independence leaders, namely: Jomo Kenyatta, Daniel arap Moi and Mwai Kibaki. The *ethnicisation* of politics, especially with the advent of multi-party democracy in the early 1990s, had a tremendous negative impact on ethnic relations resulting in inter-ethnic conflicts in each presidential election between 1992 and 2007, problematizing the quest for national unity. The violence witnessed in the aftermath of the 2007 elections saw Kenya perilously draw close to disintegration into civil war. This analysis provides a broad context for understanding the role the August 7<sup>th</sup> Memorial Park’s Documentation Centre plays in peace building, reconciliation and fostering national identity in part III. The Part demonstrates that

through its 'Peace Builder's Kids Club' and its other educational outreach programmes, the Documentation Centre has found a niche for peace-building, reconciliation and fostering of national identity. Recent activities of the Club have centred on some of these topics. First, however, a summary historical perspective of ethnicity in Kenya is given.

## **Part I: Colonialism, Ethnicity and Independence**

### **5.1.1. Pre-colonial Kenya**

The formation of the Kenyan nation and that of her constituent ethnic communities started way before the advent of colonialism. The history of the pre-colonial period, therefore, provides us with a good starting point to understand how identities of previously disparate communities came into being in the forging of a Kenyan national identity. While the invention of Kenya in its current geopolitical space dates back to the 1884/5 European struggle and partition politics, the history relating to all the various ethnic communities had been in process from a much earlier period (Mbugua & Gona, 2010:58-62, Mudimbe, 1988).

It is arguable that during the pre-colonial period there was neither a definitive ethnic group nor strong sentiments of ethnic affiliation but hybrid entities of various sorts. It is, however, from their interactions that ethnic consciousness starts to emerge. The import of giving this background in this section is to demonstrate that, whilst politicised ethnicity as a concept is widely identified as the reason for ethnic conflict in Kenya, historical records provide evidence of interaction among the various groups in pre-colonial times which have continued to the present times. As will be demonstrated in Part III of this chapter, the Memorial Park and Documentation Centre's programmes on peace strives at contributing towards promoting a culture of peace and cohesion among the Kenyan people. If this is the situation that prevailed during this early time, from whence did ethnicity with its attendant negative attributes originate?

### 5.1.2. Colonialism: The Architecture of Ethnicity in Kenya

Ideas of ethnicity and national identity in Kenya are best understood in the context of territorial distinctiveness and national consciousness whose history goes back to the treaties by select powerful European countries during the 1884/85 Berlin conference. The conference paved the way for the partition of Africa - where boundaries were drawn to divide the various African territories among themselves - and the establishment of colonial rule. Kenya was thus created and claimed by the British as a colony. Implicitly, diverse people who hitherto had never imagined themselves as a nation were now put together, often with very little regard to diversities within ethnic communities. What appears critical at this point was the need to create a national identity within a newly imposed national boundary. It is assumed that the communities inhabiting this bounded territory are sovereign and were imagined as having communion with the rest of the communities (Anderson, 1983: 6-7). Smith (1991:18) suggests, that transplanting the idea of the nation across the globe from its Western origins brought with it confusion, instability, strife and terror, particularly in places of mixed ethnic and religious character such as Kenya. It is indeed in this factor among others, as will be elaborated, that the root of ethnic strife in Kenya is to be contextualized.

Ethnicity, it is arguable, is to some extent a creature of the colonists - but given impetus by a few conniving African traditional leaders and cultural brokers - whose interest was in practice to divide the people in order to gain an upper hand in the exploitation of resources to their own benefit. Campbell (1997:109) asserts that for a long time the colonial powers believed that Africa seemed immune to the nationalist 'virus' and could therefore operate without due regard to the rights of their subjects. However, the tide of nationalistic fervour blowing elsewhere - in India and then Arab nationalism in Egypt - was sufficient for the British authorities to introduce political 'tribal' structures in Africa in an attempt to pre-empt the impact of nationalism by effecting divide-and-rule and indirect rule policies. Through such policies, the colonial state succeeded in the construction of ethnic identities, which they manipulated to entrench their rule (Berman, 1998). Notwithstanding these policies, the nationalist tide was so strong that when it eventually came that it swept aside the forces of *ethnicalisation*, forcing the imperialists to return to the drawing board. While the Western powers agreed to formally grant political independence to their African colonies, many of them in the early 1960s, they worked overtime to convert the new African leaders into 'ethnic

chauvinists' as a vital step towards dispensing with African independence. The colonists ensured that the African states remained linked with the West through the fusion of the new African elites with the old colonial state bureaucracy. Thus, the formulation of strategies to either buy off or flatter nationalist leaders – such as Kenya's Jomo Kenyatta and Malawi's Kamuzu Banda – eventually isolating them from the 'true freedom fighters' and the masses (Campbell, 1997:150).

One of the first instruments to encourage the idea of ethnic consciousness in the Kenya Colony was the establishment by 1920 of a system of administration based on the division of Kenya along ethnic lines (Ogot & Ochieng, 1995:121). Administrative boundaries were set to be coterminous with ethnic communities. In this regard, Kenya was divided into 47 districts and 8 provinces ensuring that people sharing a common language, and or espousing related cultural practices, were clustered together either in one district and, or, province. Thus the Nandi, Kiambu, Kisii, Turkana, Kitui districts were created for the Nandi, Kikuyu, Turkana and Akamba people respectively.<sup>109</sup> As a consequence, of this division, movement from one ethnically bounded district to another and association among the indigenous people soon became limited. This ethnic consciousness had earlier been implanted with the passage of the Registration of Natives Ordinance (1915) laws, and was instituted from 1920, when African males over the age of 16 years had to wear an identity card encased in a metal box (*kipande*) around their necks wherever they went within the white man's legally protected area. While its introduction was intended to regulate and ensure a steady flow of labour to the European farms, constant payment of taxes, and the arrest of those who refused to work, inadvertently entrenched ethnic awareness as it inscribed the name and ethnicity of the wearer (Anderson, 2000: 464; Elkins, 2005:16; Kakai, 1993: 160).

Another related aspect in support of this observation – that the 'divide-and-rule' strategy entrenched ethnicity – is provided by Ogot (2000:16), who notes that European settlements were planted in border areas in order to separate and isolate different African groups from one another. He supports his observation by indicating that buffer zones of European settlements were established in between the Kipsigis and the Gusii, the Kipsigis and the Luo, the Nandi and the Terik and the Kikuyu and the Maasai. Hence, the pre-colonial intermingling that had existed before was curtailed.

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<sup>109</sup> See Appendix 4 for the rest of the Kenyan districts.

This segregation of ethnic communities not only took place in the border areas, it also extended to some individual European-owned farms. Maathai (2003:22) explains that on settler Neylan's farm, for instance, where the labour force was drawn from diverse communities, these communities could not be allowed to live in close proximity to each other. Each community kept to the category of jobs assigned to it; thus, the Kikuyu worked in the fields, the Luo around the homestead as domestic workers, and the Kipsigis took care of the livestock and milking. In addition, the workers' quarters were separated from each other: hence, a Luo village was separate from a Kikuyu one as was the Kipsigis' from the Kikuyu and Luo respectively. Wanyonyi (2010: 37) observes that, "this strategy also helped to intensify and fossilize ethnic consciousness amongst the different communities and ended up promoting the feeling of exclusiveness and eventually planted the seeds of ethnocentrism and the urge for ethnocracy." It was, therefore, not by coincidence, I posit, that the ethnic violence of 1991, though politically instigated, pitted these communities against one another. (See table 5.1).

In addition, in Nairobi itself, the urban layout separated residential areas on the basis of race and ethnicity to some extent. White *et al* (1948) notes that segregated residential quarters for railway staff were created in Nairobi in 1899 when the construction of the Uganda Railway reached there and its headquarters moved from Mombasa.<sup>110</sup> Accommodation for the manual labourers and low-grade salaried employees, mainly of Indian descent, were developed next to the railway yards and depot but the higher-grade employees, most of them Europeans, were settled on the foothill of the Kikuyu escarpment. It was not until 1919 that the first African quarters were developed by the Town Council to provide decent accommodation to the Africans returning from the First World War in the Kariokor<sup>111</sup> area within the eastern zone of the town. White *et al* (ibid) maintains that this old pattern was largely maintained in the subsequent urban development plans for the city. Thus, Pumwani, Majengo, Kaloleni, Jericho and Bahati became the other housing estates within this zone, commonly referred to as Eastlands, and conveniently situated close to employment offered by the railway and the industrial area, were soon developed for the African working class. Within these residential estates, specific ethnic communities further segregated themselves along ethnic lines, thus,

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<sup>110</sup> See section 1.1.1 for a brief history of the establishment of Nairobi.

<sup>111</sup> The name is a corruption of 'Carrier Corps'.

Kaloleni became a predominantly Luo estate while Bahati was mainly occupied by the Kikuyu. By 1945, Nairobi had become the largest town in eastern Africa with a multi-racial population of over 100,000 inhabitants consisting of Africans, Asians and the Europeans who

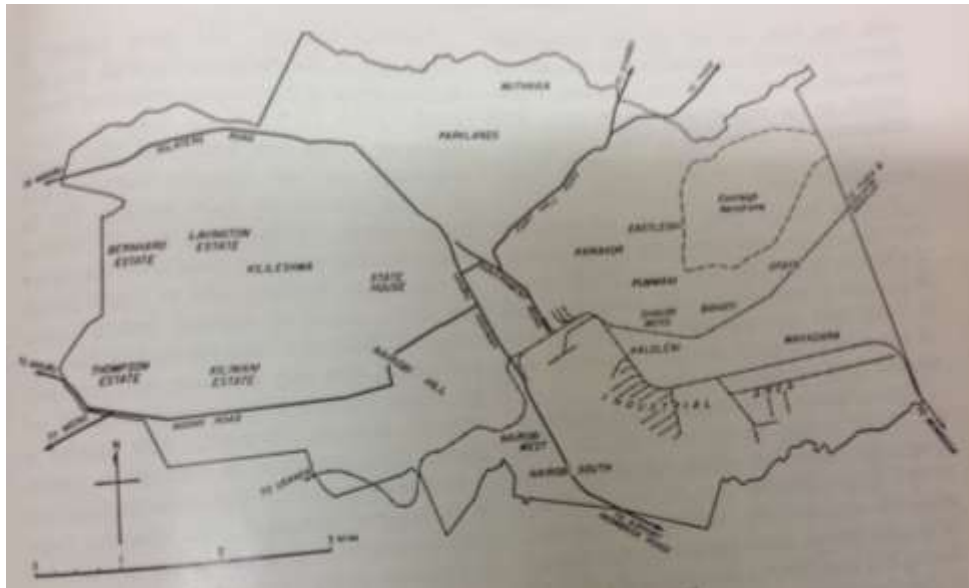


Fig. 5.1: Layout of Nairobi residential areas, (Map adopted from Morgan 1967 p.105).

were characterised by marked differences of religion, race, language and customs. The need to accommodate these divergent and complex cultural characteristics within the developing city led to the delineation of four different residential zones for these disparate groups. The Upper Nairobi, consisting of the higher grounds to the west and north of the city rising to 5,500 feet in areas such as Spring Valley, Muthaiga, Karen, Kileleshwa and Lavington, were earmarked for European residential housing. Plots in these areas were laid out in parcels of 5, 10 and 20 acres with strict limitations on any further subdivision. The Parklands-Eastleigh area to the north east of the city was considered a ‘middle class’ zone and was, thus, reserved for residential estates for the Asian community. By the 1950s, it had become necessary to identify a new area for the growing Asian community as the Parklands-Eastleigh zone was limited for expansion by the African municipal housing in Eastlands and the European residence to the north. Thus, the area to the south of Nairobi in places such as South B, South C and the misleadingly named, Nairobi West, were added (Morgan, 1967; White *et al*, 1948). With the exception of the political elite and the emerging new upper class commanding

business and manufacturing industries in Kenya, this zoning has largely remained intact in post-independent Kenya.

This brief discussion has demonstrated that the zoning of Nairobi's residential estates according to race and ethnicity started during the colonial period; first, through the railway administration before the colonial administrators continued with the same lay out.

The migration of labour from the rural areas did not end in the White highlands only but extended to the major urban centres in places such as Nairobi, Mombasa, Nakuru and Eldoret. In these towns, the migrant labourers encountered people of different ethnic backgrounds competing for the same economic opportunities, which made such new entrants feel unwanted. To countenance the challenges of integration in this new environment, people belonging to one ethnic group, or those emanating from the same region formed tribal associations. Thus the birth of the Luo Union, Abaluhya Union and the Akamba Union for the respective communities going by the same names which already had a large number of migrants in the urban centres. The ethnic exclusiveness in these unions presented a familial atmosphere that provided the migrants with a full sense of participation in urban life. These associations further acted as social security for members during periods of crisis such as unemployment, death, or the mere opportunity to talk in familiar idioms, therefore, strengthening the continuation of customary practices. While coming together in these associations provided members of the specific ethnic community with an institutional avenue through which economic and social differentiation could be countenanced, the fact that the associations brought together the intellectual and illiterate members of the ethnic group, the intellectuals as leaders of national thought, ended up playing significant roles in ethnic associations which stressed the importance of the ethnic community and village life more than the nation in the conceptions. Okumu (1975:187) asserts that this aspect contributed substantially to the continued primacy of ethnic interests over national identity and citizenship by those who took the reins of power immediately after independence in Kenya. Notable leaders who rose from leading the 'tribal associations' to national office included people like Paul Ngei, Martin Shikuku and Jaramogi Oginga of the Akamba, Abaluhya and Luo unions respectively. He further suggests that these associations were not traditional to African societies but were a product of the colonial situation and modernization. That the formation of these associations was a response to circumstances arising from colonialism –



urbanisation – supports the view that political ethnicity has its roots in the colonial period. Many of Kenya’s immediate post-independent leaders honed their political aspirations in these associations; it is, thus, arguable that their *ethnicalised* version of politics in Kenya today is traceable to this period.

I have previously stated that the forging of the Kenyan nation as a colonial construct was based on modular political and ideological concepts that emerged in Europe in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. According to Smith (1991: 11), the nation was conceptualized as “a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass public culture, a common economy and common legal rights for all members”. Transposed to a colony like Kenya, this created a problem as the inhabitants had disparate histories and cultural practices and did not consider themselves as one nation. This understanding of the nation also created the risk of an ethnic community exploiting it to further the collective interest of one particular community to the exclusion of the rest. It is against the background of this interpretation that the colonial government based the creation of a civic and territorial nation on the ‘dominant ethnic group’ model where the culture of the new state’s core ethnic community becomes the main pillar of the new national political identity and community. Deriving the name of the country, Kenya, from the Kikuyu’s sacred mountain, *kiri-nyaga*<sup>112</sup> reinforces this view. He posits that, “the nature of the Kenyan territorial nation is heavily influenced by the aspirations, needs and culture of the Kikuyu community” (ibid: 111). This ‘dominant ethnic group’ model was also used in Zimbabwe to advance the Shona identity, while excluding the Ndebele. This explains the sense of entitlement to leadership exhibited by the Kikuyu and arguably lies behind the resultant ethnic violence each election year – with the exception of 2013 - since the introduction of multiparty politics in 1990.<sup>113</sup> This observation supports my view that the seeds of ethnicity were sowed in Kenya during the colonial period and have continued to affect Kenya’s quest for national identity.

The appropriation of land from indigenous Kenyan communities, especially of the Kikuyu in Central Kenya by the British colonists, is the other framework in which the ethnicity question is to be viewed. Elkins (2005: 8-20) notes that Kenya’s unique position as a colony was born of the fact that it became the settlement of white colonists who were expected to form the

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<sup>112</sup> ‘Mountain of Brightness’ and the abode of the Kikuyu God, Ngai.

<sup>113</sup> Since the introduction of multiparty politics in Kenya in 1990, a majority of the Kikuyu community have always voted for their own candidate in all Presidential elections in 1992, 1997, 2002 and 2007.

economic backbone of the colony. To demonstrate how deeply the Kikuyu were affected by this appropriation, Elkins (ibid) states that in Kiambu alone, they lost over 60,000 acres of fertile land. A further establishment of settler farms to the east, south and north of Kikuyuland, together with the presence of the government-controlled Aberdare forest reserve to the west, and the southward expansion of Nairobi exerted more pressure on the Kikuyu. As immigration into the colony continued, particularly after the First World War, the colonial government formulated new interventionist policies that aimed at ensuring the viability of the colony. Key among these were policies to remove the Kikuyu from the remaining land and into the exploitative wage economy; new reserves were created for them in marginal areas that could hardly sustain them economically. This resulted in overpopulation in the reserves, such that with time a significant number migrated to the Rift Valley where they settled as squatters and labourers on European farms. They were, however, denied any land rights and continued to live as squatters until 1963 when independence was granted. In the Rift Valley, huge swathes of land were also appropriated in areas such as Kericho and Nandi Hills disenfranchising thousands of the Kipsigis and the Nandi communities. It is my submission that these developments relating to land alienation, which first started in the highlands of Central Kenya before spreading to the Rift Valley, propagated the seeds of ethnic discord and the resultant inter-ethnic violence in Kenya.

While the discussion in this section has laid emphasis on the colonial invention of ethnicity, recent research (Spear, 2003; Parsons, 2012) suggests that complex historical processes of ethnic transformation have always been at work leading to the adoption and endurance of ethnicity. I will consider these other approaches that have emerged which could be applied to the understanding of the phenomenon of ethnicity in Africa, its origins and the continued resurgence of its anachronistic forms among migrant workers, its perverse failure to fade away in the face of modernization and its explosive intrusion into the national political arena. I turn now to discuss these approaches: instrumentalist, primordialist and constructivist.

The instrumentalists focused on the ways ethnicity was mobilized by migrant workers to counter anxieties, poverty, insecurity and competition in the urban cities; by nationalists to build political constituencies and gain access to national resources; and by the cultural elite to enhance their status (ibid). This approach was, however, unable to explain the affective aspects of ethnicity that has made it such a powerful and effective means of political

mobilization. The primordialists, on the other hand, sought to explain these affective aspects of ethnicity by evoking a common history, culture and destiny. A supposed 'kinship relation' amongst them is considered as enough motivation to defend their group interests. Just like the instrumentalists, the primordialists are unable to explain the circumstances and reasons for invoking ethnicity and why it is such a powerful force. Both approaches, though, acknowledge the existence of ethnicity and ethnic groups as part and parcel of a fundamental social order.

It is, thus, the constructivists, who were left to explain the reasons for ethnicity's perversity. The constructivists, Spear suggests, "focused on the degree to which modern expressions of ethnicity were invented by colonial authorities and African intellectuals in the name of reproducing a traditional social order" (2003:17). According to this view, "Africans did not belong to fixed ethnic groups but participated instead in fluid, overlapping social networks of kin, age-mates, clients, neighbours and chiefdoms (ibid)." These networks were, however, dismantled on the advent of colonialism: new chiefdoms and native authorities were created and administered by both native chiefs and colonial authorities; the African languages and traditions were standardized and propagated by the missionaries; and new histories got to be written by a new crop of educated Africans. The net effect of these changes was the transformation of earlier ethnic forms and the emergence of distinctive ethnicities, which were then appropriated by the local people. To quote Robert Papstein (cited in Spears 2003:18), "ethnicity was politicized and hardened, as a slow-evolving, fluid ethnic self-awareness, was transformed into a new harder 'tribal' structure to the extent that 'tribalism' was stronger and more politically relevant in 1981 than in 1881."

The relationship between the Kikuyu and the Meru people of the central Kenya highlands, prior to, and during the colonial period, provided by Parsons (2012), best illustrates this constructivist perspective. He (2012:69) suggests that during the pre-colonial period, one could move from one 'tribe' to another if the adoptive and prospective hosts were sufficiently willing. This was possible because there were significant cultural and linguistic continuities among the Meru and the Kikuyu people; as did their sharing of a patrilineal line of descent, patrilocal marriage practices and the organization of society along age sets. New identities were, therefore, often assumed through migration, commerce, enslavement and intermarriage. However, when the colonial administration sought control of the central Kenya highlands, they introduced an ethnic frame to group a people, whose identities had hitherto been fluid,

into coherent and bound categories based on a shared set of characteristics. They particularly wanted to shift conquered populations, whose statelessness seemed chaotic and confusing, into understandable and manageable administrative units for ease of governance (ibid: 67). Implicitly, they invented new identities. The chiefs, who spoke on behalf of the ‘tribe’ and asserted authority over them, aided the colonial administrators in cultivating the notion of distinct ethnic identities. While the creation of ethnic identities, in this case, is attributed to the imperial colonial administrators and the native chiefs, Parsons (ibid) notes that there were continuities between the pre-conquest and colonial era that ought to be considered in defining ethnic identity. He suggests that the case of the Kikuyu migrant in Meru best illustrate the dynamics of choice and constraint which shaped ethnic identity at the individual level. It was only after realizing the difficulty of imposing a ‘state-sponsored’ tribal cultural area into a viable administrative unit that the colonial government developed policies that promoted a far more flexible and pragmatic notion of colonial ethnicity. In doing so, the administrators, sought to protect the viability of the tribally-based reserve by establishing that migrants would be adopted into new tribes. They, thus, abandoned their hitherto passionate obligation to protect the fragile tribal cultures such that by 1940, the colonial government was urging the Meru elders to accept anyone willing to convert to the authority of the Meru elders as a Meru. Parson (ibid: 75) asserts that “artificial (ritual) rebirth was made the necessary condition of stable inter-penetration of the reserve. Those who successfully completed these rituals, to the extent that host communities accepted them, became legal inter-penetrators, while those who refused and hence provoked a local backlash were infiltrators who remained subject to expulsion under the Native Lands Trust Ordinance (NLTO).” This way, the less populous Meru community assimilated the Kikuyu.

From the foregoing, I am inclined to agree with Spear’s (2003: 24) observation that “ethnic concepts, processes and politics predated the imposition of colonial rule, developing in the context of conquest states, regional exchange networks, dispersion, migration, settlement and urbanization.” Ethnicity has endured for a long time to the extent of developing its own integrity, structural principles and transformative processes and histories. Against this view, ethnicity has continuously been reinterpreted and reconstructed over time in such a way as to appear timeless and legitimate. It was also deployed by contending parties – local ethnic groups and the colonial administration - in complex processes of selectivity and

representation that lay at the core of the people's collective historical consciousness and struggle for power. It is then, simultaneously constructed, primordial and instrumental.

Spear suggests that the role of the African agency in the invention and perpetuation of ethnicity played a more significant role than the colonial agency itself. He asserts that the African ethnic entrepreneurs were well aware of their traditions, customs and ethnicity hence their ability to discuss issues of the present in terms of ideas and beliefs drawn from the past, reformulating them and revising them in the context of the present. "Those that resonated with current concerns, themselves also deriving from elements of the past in the present, are adopted, while those that do not become irrelevant (ibid: 26)." The colonial agency did not, however, have a cogent understanding of their African subjects nor did they share a common understanding amongst themselves. Against this view, it arguable that the African agency found more traction in shaping the colonial agency's policies on the construction of an ethnic identity for Kenya.

### **5.1.3. Mau Mau: The Struggle for Land and Freedom**

Before I turn to discuss how the post-independent governments of Jomo Kenyatta (1963 to 1978) and Daniel arap Moi (1978 to 2002) undermined the creation of a national identity by failing to eradicate the negative aspects of ethnicity, I briefly contextualize this discussion by introducing the Mau Mau struggle for independence.

The appropriation of land in Central Kenya; the creation of native reserves; introduction of punitive taxation and forced labour; the controlled movement of the African labourer through the introduction of the *kipande*; and the introduction of indirect-rule through the appointment of African subordinates, willing to exercise delegated power of the Colonial Administration in the form of colonial chiefs - some of who were very brutal: all these engendered the bitterness that laid the ground for armed resistance and the birth of the Mau Mau movement.<sup>114</sup> Between 1950 and 1952 a series of oaths were administered in Central Kenya to inspire courage and radicalize the Kikuyu resistance to colonial rule. The oaths triggered panic in the colonial government hence its declaration of a State of Emergency in October

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<sup>114</sup> Resistance to colonialism in Kenya was not only executed by the Kikuyu and the Mau Mau movement, resistance was staged in various forms by other Kenyan communities such as the Nandi, Luo, Borana, Giriama, and the Abagusii. I have, however, elected to illustrate my arguments using the Mau Mau as it was probably the most known of all the resistance movements in Kenya.

1952 and the launch of Operation Jock Scott to obliterate the Mau Mau resistance. The same year saw the arrest and detention of most of the major African political leaders, including Jomo Kenyatta, Bildad Kaggia, Achieng Oneko, and Fred Kubai. Kenyatta, who had been more moderate in agitating for territorial nationalism through the Kenya African Union (KAU), became Kenyatta the hero and the unifying symbol of the struggle. Instead of heralding the collapse of the Mau Mau as had been anticipated, it radicalized its leadership making the resistance more violent. Kenyatta was not a member of the Mau Mau (Maloba, 1993; Ogot & Ochieng, 1995; Anderson, 2005; Elkins, 2005). The Mau Mau slogan of *ithaka na wiyathi*, which translates as 'land and freedom' encapsulated the spirit of the struggle. Land and freedom, as will be demonstrated below, became the defining call for freedom.

The Mau Mau rebellion was eventually defeated militarily in 1954. Maloba (ibid) suggests that the rebellion was clearly instrumental in forcing the British government to immediately undertake political reform. Among these reforms were the reinstatement of African political parties in 1955, and the institution of several constitutional reforms that eventually led to the attainment of political independence on 12<sup>th</sup> December 1963 with Jomo Kenyatta as Prime Minister.

## **Part II: Challenges of Nationhood: Ethnicity, State Control and National Identity**

### **5.2.1. Sowing the Seeds of Discord: The Kenyatta Era**

The attainment of political independence in 1963 thrust on the independence leaders the challenge of building a national community that would continue holding together the disparate communities within the boundaries of the colonially-invented nation (Smith 1991). The task of the leaders, notes Ochieng (1995:91), was to transform the inherited colonial institutions to serve the culture, needs and aspirations of the people of Kenya. It was expected that the benefits of economic and social development would be distributed equitably, that treatment based on ethnicity, race, belief and class would be discarded and, instead, every Kenyan would be accorded an equal opportunity to develop while remaining faithful to the

aspiration of building the nation. This task required selfless leaders of great vision who would sacrifice their personal ideals for the sake of the nation.

In this part, I discuss how the first independence government of Jomo Kenyatta faltered in fulfilling the aspirations and hopes of many of those who were looking forward to independence. While such a discussion could become very detailed, for present purposes I elect to focus on three main areas: namely, the land question, ethnicity and politics.

There is consensus, Kimenyi and Ndungu observe (2005: 138), that Kenya's land issues are the primary source of the ethnicity question. While its history is traceable to the colonial period – the migration of Kikuyu labourers from Central Kenya to the Rift Valley to work on settler farms - the Kenyatta government exacerbated the problem. On independence the land issue was not resolved, instead the decision of the second Lancaster Constitutional Conference of 1962 - agreeing that, indigenous communities renounce any claims to land that previously belonged to them - was upheld. However, the Europeans could dispose of it on a willing-buyer-willing-seller basis hence enabling the Kikuyu migrants to purchase the land. The pastoralists who had been evicted from their land in the Rift Valley, first, by the colonialists, and now by the Kikuyu settlers, remained disenfranchised.

Independence also heralded a new wave of migration to the Rift Valley and Coast Provinces. The creation of settlement schemes in these provinces soon after independence was intended for settling those who had been rendered landless by colonial appropriation. Kimenyi and Ndungu (2010:142), for instance, provide evidence suggesting that the Kikuyu were the main beneficiaries of the Million-Acre-Settlement Scheme programme initiated by the government to settle the landless in Lamu, Kilifi, Uasin Gishu, Nakuru and Trans Nzoia in the former Coast and Rift Valley Provinces. As Kanyinga observes (quoted in Kimenyi and Ndungu 2010), the Kikuyu were the best-placed ethnic community to raise capital through land purchase cooperatives. Leys (1975), cited in Kimenyi and Ndungu (2010), reports that in a survey of 162 cooperatives, 120 were exclusively Kikuyu, and an additional 38 consisted of Kikuyu and other ethnic communities. There was very little attempt made to incorporate the indigenous communities in these settlement schemes. From the foregoing, it can be noted that the Kenyatta government did not put any reasonable effort into promoting the settlement of the original inhabitants of these districts, but instead promoted a Kikuyu land agenda.

Deprived of their ancestral land a second time, it engendered bitterness as the Kalenjin, Maasai and Samburu communities on the one hand, and the Mijikenda on the other, considered the settlement schemes in the Rift Valley and Coast Provinces to have been created on lands inscribed with their history, religion and memories. This, among other factors, provided fertile ground for the isolation and attack of the Kikuyu in the ethnic violence of the 1990s.

Aware of the existence of profound ethnic sensitivities as a result of the divide-and-rule strategies instituted by the colonial administration, the first government of independent Kenya, led by Jomo Kenyatta, had the onerous task of building a nation with one identity. In essence, a nation state in which all people were equal before the law without any discrimination based on ethnicity, colour or creed. Bogongo (quoted in Wanyonyi, 2010:40) suggests that with the threat of secession by the Somali ethnic community of north-eastern Kenya to join the Republic of Somalia, post-independent leaders were faced with the challenge of uniting all the 42 ethnic communities, as well as the many religious groups, under shared political and economic systems. The *Uhuru*<sup>115</sup> government had to formulate policies that would ensure that her citizens had the greatest share of subsequent development.

The formulation of Sessional Paper No 10 of 1965 entitled ‘African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya’<sup>116</sup> setting down the principles and strategies of Kenya’s development after independence, was seen as an instrument that would help Kenya overcome her challenges. For instance, it stated that, “our system of African Socialism will guarantee every citizen full and equal political rights. Wealth must not be permitted to confer special concessions on anyone...(Tom Mboya, quoted in Ochieng, History of Kenya, pp144-147)” While pledging equal opportunities as outlined in this Sessional Paper, Kenyatta did not remain faithful to its intentions. Instead of promoting uniform development across the nation, his government laid emphasis on investing in areas considered fertile and with high rainfall - and hence with suitability for agriculture - which would guarantee quick returns on investment, further marginalizing areas with less potential. Infrastructure development, industry and commerce ventures were concentrated on the major urban centres of Nairobi, Mombasa, and notably in the Central Kenya towns of Kiambu, Thika, Muranga and Nyeri

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<sup>115</sup> Swahili word for Independence

<sup>116</sup> Its formulation is credited to Tom Mboya who was then Minister of Economic Planning and Development.



leading to growth imbalance between regions and different groups of the population (International Labour Organization, 1972:2). This turn of events diluted the sense and pride of belonging to the newly independent nation. In northern Kenya, the Somali renewed their demand to secede, while communities in other marginalized parts of Kenya such as the Turkana and Pokot started to perceive Kenya as a 'foreign' country. To rephrase Anderson (1983:6) they could not imagine themselves belonging to the same nation as the inequality had become too deep and horizontally wide for a sense of comradeship to be sustained. Hence the reference by many a Pokot, Turkana, Borana or Somali resident in the north of the country on a trip to Nairobi (or any other major urban areas within what previously constituted the White Highlands) as 'travelling to Kenya', a perception that gained currency, particularly during the Kenyatta era.

Entrenchment of politicised ethnicity in government continued unabated. Seeking security in ethnic numbers and returning favours soon started to characterize Kenyatta's rule. Members of the Kikuyu community were appointed to important positions in the civil service, and procedures for government contracts, loans and business licenses were soon relaxed to enable the Kikuyu community to benefit from the fruits of independence. As Maxon (1995:122) states, "many of the social issues publicly aired during the initial decade of independence took on a pronouncedly ethnic character as some ethnic groups, usually the Kikuyu, were said to be holding the best jobs in the civil service." By 1974, for instance, Odipo<sup>117</sup> argues that as Kenyatta was aging his ethnic kinsmen took advantage to fill the civil service with members of his community. Thus, top jobs in the Ministry of Finance, the Kenya Ports Authority, the Ministry of Defence except the Armed Forces Command, in the Office of the President where four out of the eight Provincial Commissioners, were Kikuyu. The Ndegwa Commission Report of 1971, which recommended the participation of civil servants in commerce and industry, saw the emergent Kikuyu bureaucrats start wanton accumulation of wealth, directorship in companies, commerce and all things they had detested in the colonial administration. This ethnic bigotry did not go down well with the rest of the country. Soon some non-Kikuyu elites in government started challenging this state of affairs with the then-Vice President, Jaramogi Odinga, for instance, terming the 'African Socialism' espoused by the Kenyatta government as "simply a cloak for the practice of tribalism and capitalism" (Ogot & Ochieng, 1995:99-100).

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<sup>117</sup> *Sunday Standard*, January 10, 1999.

### 5.2.2. Politics of Power and State Control

Whereas the political parties and processes leading to independence seemed to transcend any ethnic, religious and racial identities, the attainment of independence revealed internal power dynamics couched in ethnic tones. The politics of the two independent parties, the Kenya African Union (KANU) and the Kenyan African Democratic Union (KADU), and later the Kenya People's Union (KPU) demonstrate that in the struggles to control the state, the seeds of politicised ethnicity were further broadcast. Oyugi (1998:29) contends that with KANU favouring a unitary system of government and having the support of the majority ethnic communities – the Kikuyu and the Luo – while KADU's preference for a *majimbo*<sup>118</sup> (federalism) system and having the support of minority ethnic communities, the stage for ethnic competition was set. He (ibid) further avers that between 1963 and 1964, the conflict between the KANU government and the only opposition party, KADU, led to areas, which were predominantly pro-opposition being denied funds from the central government to run the federal (*majimbo*) governments. This resulted in communities in the KADU areas venting their anger against the Luo and Kikuyu communities, which were predominant in KANU. In the face of these frustrations, KADU disbanded to join KANU signalling the end of the first phase in the on-going inter-ethnic suspicion and tension and the onset of one party rule.

However, this dalliance between the Kikuyu and the Luo in KANU was short-lived. Dissatisfied with the ethnic dimensions the Kenyatta government was taking, the unresolved land question, corruption and the formulation of new dictatorial laws such as the Preventive Detention Act of 1966, Jaramogi Odinga was prompted to resign as Vice President to form the socialist-leaning KPU. Beyond its opposition to the Western orientation of the KANU leadership, KPU aimed at replacing the persistently ethnic basis of politics with a framework founded on ideological or social and economic grounds. Odinga's resignation was followed soon thereafter by that of 18 Members of Parliament and 9 Senators to join KPU. The inter-ethnic differences previously camouflaged in party accommodations now became more pronounced (Wanyonyi, 2010: 40). Kikuyu members of parliament who resigned alongside

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<sup>118</sup> Federalism has always been wrongly interpreted in Kenya to mean the creation of ethnic enclaves for the communities that are indigenous to the federal region and an expulsion of migrant ones.

Odinga were branded as traitors, presumably to the ‘Kikuyu nation’, and went on to lose in the subsequent by-election. It is only members of the Luo community that made it back to parliament, hence ending up by *ethnicizing* KPU. Instead of addressing the grievances raised by Odinga’s party, Kenyatta hardened his stand, viewing his opponents as agents of Communists who were out to depose him. KPU was thus banned; Odinga and other leaders of his party were put in detention in 1969. Tom Mboya, perceived as a flamboyant, intelligent and ambitious Luo politician, was gunned down on the 6<sup>th</sup> June 1969, presumably by the Kikuyu elite fearing that he might out-manoeuvre them in their schemes to succeed Kenyatta. Afraid of this threat, the Kikuyu resorted to oath-taking ceremonies to reinforce ethnic solidarity and prevent political power from leaving the ‘House of Mumbi.’<sup>119</sup> Three months after this assassination, while visiting Kisumu in Luo country to open a hospital built with funds from Russia,<sup>120</sup> Kenyatta’s motorcade was stoned prompting his elite bodyguards to shoot at the crowds. 43 people died. This marked the end of Kenyatta’s visits to Nyanza until his death in 1978 (Anyang-Nyong, 1989:32; Murray-Brown, 1972: 317; Ogot & Ochieng, 1995: 92-102). With the elimination of Mboya, the detention of Odinga and his supporters, Kenyatta’s ethnic-based leadership had been secured.

The significance of the split between Kenyatta and Odinga in 1966 and the events that followed thereafter, is that it cemented ethnic animosities between the Luo and the Kikuyu. Being two of Kenya’s largest communities, the effects of ethnicity soon spread to other communities, as they had to devise strategies of surviving the Luo-Kikuyu political axis. The so-called ‘*ethnicization*’ of Kenyan politics is, thus, best illustrated in the relations of these two communities and the alliances that are formed around them. It is arguable that Kenyatta’s last few years in office were dominated by scheming against the Luo, making the creation of a unified nation illusory. The post-election violence experienced in Kenya in the wake of the contested 2007 election results, can be best understood as a competition for the Presidency between Mwai Kibaki and Raila Odinga, representing the Kikuyu and Luo ethnic enclaves respectively.

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<sup>119</sup> The Kikuyu myth of origin traces their ancestry to Gikuyu and Mumbi.

<sup>120</sup> Assumedly raised through the efforts of Jaramogi Odinga.

### 5.2.3. *Nyayoism*:<sup>121</sup> **Following the Footsteps of Kenyatta**

In this section, I demonstrate that the seeds of discord sown and nurtured during the Kenyatta regime matured in the Moi era in the form of ethnic violence. As this chapter is intended to provide a broad context for the understanding of the circumstances prevailing at the time of the Nairobi terror attack, this section focuses on the engendering of politically-motivated ethnicity following the introduction of multiparty politics in Kenya and its threat to national unity and identity. This foreshadows a discussion of the role of the Memorial Park and Documentation Centre in facilitating peace building, reconciliation and a dialogue of nationalism as it was created out of circumstances of conflict. Albeit of a different nature, it is nonetheless relevant to its broad mandate.

Following the death of Jomo Kenyatta, Daniel arap Moi, his Vice President of twelve years, assumed the reins of power in 1978. This was at a time of multiple challenges: politicised ethnicity was already deeply ingrained; political and economic power was under the control of a small clique of politicians that had thrived during the Kenyatta years; there were divisive succession politics and secessionist threats by the *ngoroko*<sup>122</sup> in the north. The forging of a united nation remained profoundly problematical. While many Kenyans were optimistic that arap Moi's leadership would provide a significant break with the corrupt and ethnic ways of the previous regime and herald the birth of a new era, he declared that his leadership would follow in the footsteps of the founding father of the nation.

### 5.2.4. **Consolidation of Power**

Before the first general elections of his regime in 1979, President Moi had preserved almost intact the structure and institutions of power he had inherited from his predecessor – the police, provincial administration, and the army. Yet he faced considerable opposition from powerful economic, political and ethnic alliances and factions who felt threatened by having

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<sup>121</sup> A call introduced by Moi in 1978 on becoming President to rally the nation to follow in the footsteps of Kenyatta in the development of the nation which soon transformed into a political philosophy for his regime with the rhetoric of peace, love and unity.

<sup>122</sup> Euphemism for bandits. The ethnic stalwarts in the Kenyatta regime, opposed to Moi ascending to the Presidency in the likelihood of an unexpected demise of Kenyatta, had threatened to use this illegal outfit to eliminate him.

a President who might not protect their interests. Those elections, therefore, provided President Moi with the opportunity to form his own team. For the first time he appointed into cabinet members from hitherto marginalized communities such as the Somali, Turkana and from his own Kalenjin community, while appointing many others to significant positions in the civil service. While instituting these changes, he was careful not to overtly antagonize some of the Kikuyu who were still holding influential positions in the civil service. His government also endeavoured to design social, economic and political programmes to incorporate all those regions and communities that had previously been alienated by the Kenyatta regime. One such programme was the District Focus Policy for Rural Development of 1983, which aimed at empowering districts in making decisions on their development agenda instead of the Provinces and the Ministry headquarters in Nairobi as was the case. Whereas it was a well-intentioned idea, it later came to be viewed as one that promoted ethnicity, as it implied each ethnic community in their own district setting their own development agenda. Schools within a district were, for instance, required to admit 75% of their students from their locality (read ethnic community) leading to the creation of virtually 'mono-ethnic' schools.

In the later parts of the 1980s, President Moi proscribed all ethnic-based organisations such as the Gikuyu, Embu and Meru Association (GEMA), the Luo Union, New Kamba Union and the Abaluhya Welfare Association, claiming that they were enclaves for breeding and perpetuating ethnicity and were thus impeding his aspirations to build only one 'ethnic group' known as 'Kenya' (Ogot and Ochieng, 1995:195; Mbugua & Gona, 2010: 42). Up to this point, it is arguable, that Moi was keen on putting the nation on a path towards the achievement of a national identity.

On the political front, however, the one party state that President Moi had inherited remained intact. Those opposed to the Moi policies did not find an avenue to express their divergent views and took their campaigns 'underground' eventually occasioning the 1982-attempted coup. The abortive coup, it can be postulated, changed the course of Moi's leadership. Instead of continuing with his efforts towards the building of a unified nation, he started a ruthless campaign to break any opposition to his regime becoming more dictatorial. Thus, like President Kenyatta before him, he resorted to his own ethnic community to buttress his regime, heralding the inter-ethnic suspicion and conflicts in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

He infiltrated the Provincial Administration, the Police and the Army with members of his own ethnic community and used them, especially the Provincial Administration, to track down and neutralize any dissent to his Presidency. For instance, by 1997, out of the 65 District Commissioners (DC's), 35 were from his Kalenjin community, yet in numerical strength this community does not constitute even a third of the Kenyan population.<sup>123</sup>

According to Ogot and Ochieng (1995:193) “[A]s Moi consolidated his power and the strength and confidence of the new regime grew, *nyayoism* expanded to acquire ideological functions”. Moi emphasized that this philosophy was built on the foundational tenets of love, peace and unity; hence it was deserving of a central place in nation building (Moi, 1986:22). It became the axis under which all other ideologies, such as, African socialism, nationalism, patriotism, anti-tribalism, constitutional democracy, anti-ethnicity and any other positive ideas, revolved. Resistance to his regime continued with calls for a return to multiparty democracy intensifying.

#### **5.2.5. Ethnicity, Violence and Multiparty Democracy**

The processes leading to the introduction and establishment of multiparty democracy in Kenya placed intense pressure on Moi's *nyayoism* foreshadowing its collapse. The return to pluralism in 1991, it was feared, would threaten the Kalenjin ruling elites' hold on power and the massive resources they controlled. Violence became a means of retaining the status quo. In such situations of flux, to paraphrase Eriksen (2010:120), ethnicity attains its greatest importance. It subsequently became a major factor in defining and determining the management of socio-economic and political affairs in the country, including some elements of the Memorial Park.

It is with this return to multiparty politics in 1991 that the *ethnicalization* of politics in Kenya became very glaring. This view resonates with Kimenyi's (1997) argument that ethnic identification in politics is alive and well in Africa, which results in ethnicity being perhaps the single most effective predictor of political preferences. Hence, KANU, the ruling party, became the party for the Kalenjin and other minority groups particularly the Maasai, Turkana

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<sup>123</sup> (*Sunday Nation*, September 19, 1997, p.2)

and Samburu or KAMATUSA, to use Kenya's political parlance; the National Development Party (NDP) became the party for the Luo while the Democratic Party (DP) and the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy – Asili (FORD-Asili) – were largely associated with the Kikuyu. The other ethnic communities aligned themselves with these political parties depending either on socio-cultural factors or on the political favours that were promised. The association of particular parties with specific communities validated President Moi's argument - while objecting to the introduction of multiparty democracy - that Kenya's return to it would threaten the state, polarize the country along ethnic lines and plunge it into ethnic violence (Muhoma & Nyairo, 2011: 410-415; FIDH & KHRC, 2007:8).

Fearing that the 'tyranny of numbers' that could be marshalled by the opposition parties might consign the ruling party to an election defeat (and as though to fulfil President Moi's prophesy), politicians from his Rift Valley home-base started a campaign for the return to a federal system of government (*majimboism*), and for the forcible removal of other ethnic groups viewed as opposition adherents. Consequently, violence erupted in many parts of the Rift Valley, Nyanza and Western Provinces. An examination of the 'violence hotspots' reveal that the violence mainly occurred in areas that were settled by migrant communities after independence and in the border areas previously settled by the colonists as buffer zones<sup>124</sup> preventing the different ethnic communities from interacting with each other. Muriungi (1995), for instance, posits that the democratic transition in 1991 – and, I would add to this, the run up to the elections of 1997 - inflamed latent ethnic hatred, particularly against the Kikuyu, who are said to have benefitted disproportionately from the settlement schemes. For supporting the opposition parties, the Kikuyu and Luo seemed the perfect target for displacement. The motivation for this violence was to intimidate a sufficient number of people to either flee their homes – and hence not vote – or to induce them to vote for the ruling party, as a guarantee for their security and continued stay in the region (Kimenyi & Ndungu, 2005:149; FIDH & KHRC, 2011:9). The election results of 1992 and 1997 in which President Moi, the KANU candidate, won with minority votes suggests the success of this strategy.

The run up to the 1997 elections was once more riven with much apprehension among ethnic groups, as the memories of the ethnic clashes preceding the 1992 elections were still fresh.

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<sup>124</sup> Refer to 5.1.2 for the details of the divide-and-rule strategies employed by the British colonists in Kenya.

The zoning of the country according to political party and ethnic affiliation and declaring the zones as exclusive party enclaves did not help in building confidence in a peaceful election. In response to the eviction threats and another election defeat staring it in the face, the Kikuyu threatened to revive the Gikuyu, Embu and Meru Association (GEMA) and transform it into a political party believing that GEMA's unity would help propel the Kikuyu back to leadership. Frantic efforts by the opposition to form political party alliances were also mooted with little success. In this state of flux, the ruling party again unleashed the tricks it used to win the 1992 elections by instigating violence. Violence occurred in other parts of the country as indicated in Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1: Ethnic and Political Unrest in Kenya, 1991 – 1998.

Year/ Period	Location	Ethnic Communities	Causes	Effects
	<b>Rift Valley</b>			
Mar.-Apr. 1992	Kericho district (Belgut/Muhoroni border)	Kalenjin vs. Kisii and Luo	Kalenjin burnt down Luo homes triggering retaliatory attacks.  Political dimension because Luo were associated with FORD an opposition party and the Kipsigis, KANU, the ruling party.	Property destroyed and death of 24 people Luo forced out of region
Nov 1992 to March 1993.	Ainamoi/Buru Farm and Thesalia Holdings.	Kalenjin vs. Luo	An attempt by the Kipsigis and the Provincial Administration to evict Luo from Buru Farm.	Displacement of Luo. Threatened voters made to vote in accordance with the wishes of the Kipsigis.  Destruction of 150 houses and property, 250 families displaced.



At various times in 1991, 1992, 1996 and 1997.	Nakuru district in the settler farms in Molo, Njoro and Olenguruone.	Kalenjin vs. immigrants mainly Kikuyu, Luo and Kisii	Politically instigated as Rift Valley politicians wanted to create a KANU zone free from the opposition.	More than 1,500 people killed and another 300,000 displaced. Collapse of the agriculture sector in the district.
Oct. & Nov 1991, March 1992	Nandi district (Songhor location, Tinderet division, Cheboigony and Kapenguria farms.	Nandi attack non-Kalenjin people mainly the Kisii.	Politically instigated after cabinet ministers, 34 Councillors and top KANU officials vowed to expel non KAMATUSA ethnicities from the Rift Valley Province.	Non-Kalenjins ejected from the area.
On various dates in 1991, 1993 and 1997	Narok, Gucha and Trans Mara districts. (Along Kisii, Maasai and Kikuyu borderlands.	Maasai vs. Kisii.	Politically instigated, as the Kisii are believed to have ditched KANU for the opposition. Cattle rustling as Maasai raid the Kisii for livestock. Land dispute between the Kisii and the Maasai	24 people killed, hundreds displaced.  Voters influenced to vote parties against their choice.
Jan. 1998	Laikipia district (Ol-Moran division and Ngarua	Kikuyu, Samburu and Pokot.	Politically instigated as the Kikuyu largely supported opposition parties while the Samburu and Pokot supported KANU.	3 people killed, others injured and property destroyed. Kikuyu were directed to either vote for KANU or be expelled from the area.
	<b>Coast Province</b>			
Aug. to Nov 1997	Kwale district (Matuga, Ngombeni location, Mtongwe, Msambweni, Shonda)	Coastal communities against the Luo and Kikuyu immigrants	Local KANU politicians supported majimbo/federalism, hence planned to attack upcountry people. Kikuyu and LUO targeted for they were perceived to be in the opposition. Business rivalry.	About 65 people killed including 13 police officers, thousands displaced, destruction of property including a police station and loss of jobs for the displaced.

Aug. to Sept. 1997	Mombasa district (LIKONI, Kisumu Ndogo, Maweni and Shauri Yako)	Digo vs. Kikuyu, Luo, Luhya and Kamba	Politically instigated as local politicians rallied their tribes to support federalism and eject those opposed.	62 killed including 10 police officers, over 100, 000 others displaced. Upcountry communities ejected from the area to stop them voting for opposition candidates.
	<b>Nyanza Province</b>			
Nov. 1997	South Nyanza (Maasai Kisii-border)	Maasai vs. Kisii	--	30 people killed.
	<b>NAIROBI</b>			
Oct. 1995	Langata (Kibera slums)	Luo vs. Nubians.	Political differences, Luo support FORD-Kenya, the Nubian KANU.	5 people killed.

Source: Kimenyi and Ndungu (2005: 128-139).

KANU's win in those elections further entrenched inter-ethnic division as the ethnicity card had been used to play communities against each other. In the first half of 1998, there was open political bickering, accusations and counter-accusations of instigation of violence that created a lot of uncertainty as the fears of retaliation remained constant. It was in this state of flux that the 1998 Nairobi terror attack occurred.

Though the Kenyan leadership, through President Moi and the leading figures of the four major opposition parties, came out to rally Kenyans to stand united in the face of the atrocities occasioned by the 1998 Nairobi terror attack, this study reveals that this public portrayal of unity was simply feigned to suit the prevailing circumstances. Deep within the bowels of Kenyan politics, ethnicity and political rivalries remained. The conspicuous absence of the opposition's 'Big Four' leadership during the first anniversary commemoration in 1999 buttresses this position (*Sunday Standard*: 8<sup>th</sup> August, 1999).

## Part III: Peace, Reconciliation and the Projections of National Identity

### 5.3.1 Inspiring Unity and Nationalism

The bombing of the U.S. embassy in Nairobi in 1998 inspired Kenyans in all walks of life to come together in a rare display of unity never otherwise witnessed in the country's recent history (Akahenda, 2002; Kasfir, 2005). Their response in offering assistance in rescue, first aid, food and clothing and in offering prayers in places of worship across the country was unprecedented.

What however captured the attention of many Kenyans was the way in which the tragedy brought together leaders from across the political divide, particularly President Daniel arap Moi and leaders of the main opposition political parties,<sup>125</sup> who a few months earlier had been feuding following the divisive presidential campaigns of the general elections of 1997. Nowhere was this show of nationalism more poignantly demonstrated than in seeing President Moi, Mwai Kibaki, Charity Ngilu, Raila Odinga and Wamalwa Kijana riding on one vehicle to the site.

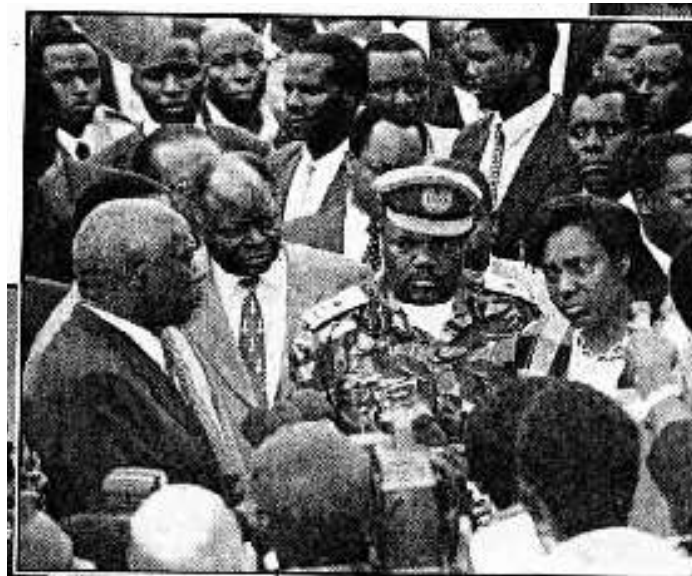


Fig.5.2. President Moi (left) Mwai Kibaki (2<sup>nd</sup>left) and Charity Ngilu (right) being briefed by General Agoi<sup>126</sup> (middle) at the bomb blast site. (Source: *East African Standard*, 12.08.1998).

<sup>125</sup> The Democratic Party's (DP) Mwai Kibaki, Ford Kenya's Kijana Wamalwa, National Alliance Party of Kenya's (NAC) Charity Ngilu and National Development Party's (NDP) leader Raila Odinga.

<sup>126</sup> Head of the Kenya Army Search and Rescue Team.

Their speeches at the site were equally laden with exhortations to nationalism. Rarely did they make reference to ethnic groups in their speeches; but instead there were phrases such as ‘our loss’, ‘our beloved motherland’, ‘we shall overcome’ and ‘God bless Kenya’. Even the Presidential Press Service (PPS) that traditionally devotes no time to the opposition politicians, unless when praising the President, gave them coverage on this occasion.

Their coming together during this tragic occasion received positive commendation. The *Sunday Nation* (16.08.1998) commentary, for instance, noted that in an unprecedented show of cooperation, “there was contact and proximity, there was sober deliberation and profound absence of posturing and populism. For the first time in multiparty Kenya, the political leadership behaved in the manner of statesmen and stateswomen.”

The National Convention Executive Council<sup>127</sup> (NCEC), for its part observed that, “although the tragedy has compounded national problems facing the country, Kenyans had used the chance to bridge their differences to respond to a national disaster...ordinary Kenyans have shown a unique and un-paralleled sense of nationalism and unity of purpose.”

I posit that the positive display of unity and nationalism in this instance was consistent with human reaction in the aftermath of disasters of such magnitude (Sturken, 2007). The outpouring of emotion and display of unity soon diminished, ordinary Kenyans went back to their ethnic comfort zones while politicians continued calculating how to woo them to their ethnically-inclined political parties in preparation for the next elections.<sup>128</sup> Even before the dust of the 1998 bombing attack had settled, there was accusation that the media coverage of the rescue mission was ethnically nuanced reflecting the *ethnicalized* political affairs at the national level. It was, thus, necessary that in accordance with the wishes of the founding trustees, the August 7th Memorial Park and Documentation Centre played a role in promoting peace-building, reconciliation and foster nationalism upon its completion in 2004. The post-election violence witnessed in the aftermath of the disputed presidential elections in 2007/2008 – which took a notably ethnic angle – was instrumental in refocusing the

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<sup>127</sup> A not-for-profit national organization established by the civil society in 1997 to advocate for constitutional reforms, advancement of social justice, respect for human rights, and multiparty democracy with the long- term view of the realization of sustainable democracy and development in Kenya.

<sup>128</sup> Kenyan politicians start their electioneering in readiness for the next elections immediately after a general election. Any visitor to Kenya, at any time, would be forgiven for thinking that the country is soon going for a general election.

Documentation Centre's activities. The formation of the Peace Builder's Kids Club (PBKC) is one such initiative to address the challenges of ethnicity, conflict and threats to nationalism. It is to these issues that I now turn.

### 5.3.2 Manifestations of Ethnicity

In this section, I revisit how the monster of ethnicity became manifest during the period of rescue alluded to in Chapter 2 by building on Obwogo's (1999) argument that the Kenyan mainstream media took an ethnic angle in their coverage of the rescue efforts through their portrayal as embodiment of tragedy of two Kikuyu victims, Rose Wanjiku<sup>129</sup> and Sammy Nganga.<sup>130</sup> An examination of newspaper articles devoted to individual victims of the bomb blast published in two of Kenya's leading newspapers, the *Daily Nation* and the *East African Standard* between 10<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> August<sup>131</sup> 1998 supports Obwogo's argument.

Of the 12<sup>132</sup> news items published focussed on the rescue, 8 were dedicated to members of the Kikuyu community with Rose Wanjiku featuring in 6. Only 3 items discuss members belonging to a different ethnic community; 2 items to the rescue of Akinyi Odindo and her 13 year-old son whose story would have inspired the rescue teams and those families whose relatives were still trapped or reported lost, considering that the two were rescued on the first day the professional teams moved to the site on the 9<sup>th</sup> August 1998. There is also the story of Mr Koimburi's<sup>133</sup> search for his brother. The media went ahead to give details of Rose's family, including her mourning son, disputes on her marital status and burial. Similarly, Nganga's story did not end on being rescued, the media coverage extended to his recuperation in hospital. His was the face the world saw, shaking hands with members of the high-profile Israeli rescue team. His was the story that the world heard as it learnt that Kenya's 'Rose' was gone. Trying to turn Rose into another Princess Diana and referring to her as "Kenya's candle in the wind" was a pure show of ethnic chauvinism as a similar story

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<sup>129</sup> Rose was an employee of Ufundi Cooperative House who died as rescuers battled to save her life under tons of rubble where she had been stuck for more than 36 hours.

<sup>130</sup> A scrap-metal dealer who was in the Ufundi Cooperative House with business partners when the bombing struck. He was in communication with Rose while trapped next to each other but was lucky to be rescued after more than 30 hours.

<sup>131</sup> Professional rescuers from Israel, South Africa, the UK, USA and France were engaged from 9<sup>th</sup> August up to 16<sup>th</sup> August, 1998 when the mission was declared over.

<sup>132</sup> See table in Appendix 5 for details.

<sup>133</sup> A Luo.

could have been written about the other victims as well. In their discussion of the challenges of creating a Kenyan national narrative, Coombes *et al* (2014:43) see a role for the print and electronic media “since they have been functioning as avenues for the promotion, if not creation, of narratives of ethnicities and oftentimes narratives of real or assumed historical injustices with the aim of justifying entitlement to certain offices.” It is, therefore, not strange that in this instance, the media created and promoted a one-sided narrative portraying the two members of the Kikuyu ethnic group of being the embodiment of the tragedy.

This position was further supported by Mr Ali Mwadame, the immediate former chairman of the August Seventh Bomb-blast Victims Association (ASBVA). This is what he said in an interview:<sup>134</sup>

“Apart from Rose and Nganga, there were other people rescued from the collapsed buildings after many hours, if not days. The whereabouts of others remained unknown for many days and the media should have also reported these incidences.”

This leads me to my other argument which suggests that, whereas ASBVA was formed as an umbrella welfare body to advocate for the interests of all surviving victims and family members of those who had died, ethnic rivalry has stymied its efforts of actualizing the association’s objectives. Ethnic competition and wrangling amongst the members, especially for the position of chair<sup>135</sup> has been the association’s greatest undoing. This ethnic rivalry is, however, reflective of politics at the national level to which I now turn.

In this section, I briefly discuss the political events prevailing at the national level between 2002 and 2008 to provide context to the ethnic division that permeated the leadership of ASBVA. The three<sup>136</sup> leading opposition parties approached the 2002 national presidential and parliamentary elections, as a united front through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on power-sharing should they win in those elections. The three parties coalesced around a new political vehicle, the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC), with Mwai Kibaki

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<sup>134</sup> Personal communication (Nairobi, 9<sup>th</sup> August 2012).

<sup>135</sup> The position of chairman in this association is very powerful overshadowing the Secretary, Treasurer and Organizing Secretary. In the entire period of my interaction with members of the association, there was very little reference to the other officials.

<sup>136</sup> National Alliance Party of Kenya of Charity Ngilu, Liberal Democratic Party headed by Raila Odinga and Mwai Kibaki’s Democratic Party.

as their preferred presidential candidate. Having rallied the ‘big five’<sup>137</sup> ethnic communities to their side, as expected, NARC won the elections by garnering a decisive 62.2% of the total presidential votes cast paving the way for Mwai Kibaki to be declared President (Nunley, 2006). However, when the president named his cabinet, he appointed his Kikuyu ethnic community members and their cousins<sup>138</sup> to important ministerial portfolios,<sup>139</sup> going back on the terms of the MOU, to the chagrin of the coalition partners. This prompted a rebellion by the LDP-allied side of government culminating in the 2005 constitutional referendum’s<sup>140</sup> defeat of the Kibaki-allied side and the subsequent divorce of the coalition partners. The break-up set the scene for the highly divisive 2007 presidential and parliamentary elections (Lind & Howell, 2010:339; Mutua, 2008:285). By the time of the elections in December 2007, the country was divided right down the middle. President Kibaki led a new political alliance, the Party of National Unity (PNU), and drew support mainly from his Kikuyu community and their neighbouring cousins; while another group, consisting mainly of the Luo, Luhya and the Kalenjin supported the Raila Odinga-led Orange Democratic Movement (ODM).<sup>141</sup> The vote was very close. Contrary to the expectations of many, when the results were announced on the 30<sup>th</sup> December 2007, President Mwai Kibaki had won and was immediately sworn in as President at dusk on the lawns of State House. This sparked spontaneous outrage that morphed into inter-ethnic violence pitting the Luo and the Kalenjin on one side and the Kikuyu on the other. After a whole month of violence, more than 1300 people had been killed and over 600,000 others displaced. The intervention by the international community, through negotiations led by immediate former Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, culminated in the power-sharing agreement on 28<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> According to the 2009 population census, the ‘big five’ in order of numerical strength are the Kikuyu, Luhya, Kalenjin, Luo then the Kamba.

<sup>138</sup> The Meru and the Aembu people who also inhabit the central Kenya highlands share many cultural traits with the Kikuyu.

<sup>139</sup> Finance, National Security and Provincial Administration, Justice and Constitutional Affairs, and Education ministries were given to David Mwiraria, Dr Chris Murungaru, Kiraitu Muriungi and Prof George Saitoti respectively.

<sup>140</sup> Kenyan’s had advocated for a new constitution since the early 1990’s but the regime of Daniel arap Moi (1978-2002) resisted only yielding minimum reforms in 1997. NARC came to power in 2003 with a promise to enact a new constitution in 100 days; however, the split in government after Kibaki appointed his cabinet made it a difficult promise to fulfil. There was acrimony throughout the process of drafting the constitution with both sides of the coalition refusing to compromise on aspects such as: retention of an all-powerful Presidency, centralized power vis-à-vis devolution and land reform. While Kibaki’s DP and NAPK supporters were for the retention of the above, the Raila Odinga-led LDP with the support of the Kenya African National Union (KANU) advocated change. When the plebiscite was called, the pro-draft leaning side of President Kibaki lost it by garnering 48.88% against the opposition’s 51.12%.

<sup>141</sup> The orange was the symbol of the movement opposing the draft constitution in the 2005 constitutional plebiscite under the leadership of Raila Odinga. Buoyed by its defeat of the draft, it morphed into a political party, the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) and went ahead to contest in the 2007 elections.

February, 2008 and the subsequent formation of the Grand Coalition Government following the enactment of the Kenya National Accord and Reconciliation Act (Muhoma & Nyairo, 2011; Mutua, 2008). The power sharing deal was on a 50%-50% basis in which Mwai Kibaki remained President while Raila Odinga became Prime Minister. Again, just as in 2003, President Kibaki retained the most important portfolios in government. Bickering, sabotage and power games became entrenched in the running of affairs of government for the rest of its five-year tenure.

The leadership of ASBVA has been plagued by ethnicity since its formation in 2001 overshadowing the real purpose of its existence: to advocate for the welfare of victims of the 1998 Nairobi terror attack. Douglas Sidialo<sup>142</sup> who was its founding chair had the support of the majority of the members in the first two years of its formation. Sidialo stated that in his first year, all the members were united and supportive of each other in their quest for continued medication, government support and in pursuing compensation from the US government. However, from May 2003 divisions fashioned along ethnic lines started to emerge and became more visible as they set out plans for the 5<sup>th</sup> commemorative events. He noted that his officials started to pull in different directions, each one believing that a politician from his ethnic community would be more sympathetic to their cause. Thus, the Kikuyu, Luo and Luhya thought that Chris Murungaru, Raila Odinga and Moody Awori respectively would support the event and the group to achieve its objectives. In the association's meetings, members started taking sides along ethnic lines whenever any donations were received by the group. How to nominate beneficiaries for school fees assistance, for instance, always ended up taking an ethnic dimension. Disillusioned, he opted not to offer himself for re-election in November 2003. Between 2005 and 2007, Naomi Kerongo<sup>143</sup> was chairperson and during her tenure, no significant ethnic competition was reported. This could arguably be attributed to the fact that she was not from any of the 'big five' communities and would therefore be a unifying factor in rallying the association to achieve its objectives.

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<sup>142</sup> Personal interview (Nairobi, 10<sup>th</sup> January 2012).

<sup>143</sup> An Abagusii.



Paul Walla, a Luo, succeeded Naomi Kerongo in 2008 and worked with a committee of four other members drawn from different ethnicities.<sup>144</sup> His tenure was, however, riven with ethnic antagonism that brought the association to the brink of obscurity with many of its active members, including the committee, withdrawing from its activities. Whilst the intention of electing the five from different ethnic communities was for the purpose of projecting a national identity, the wrangling at the national political level cascaded down to its ranks. Soon, mistrust based on ethnicity and associated political party affiliations, divided the members. They however continued with the plans for the tenth anniversary amid these divisions. To the credit of the officials, and more so Mr Walla,<sup>145</sup> Raila Odinga, the Prime Minister (PM), presided over the occasion. In his speech, the PM empathised with their suffering and promised that the government would henceforth take over from where the U.S. government had left in 2003 and would assist them to access the requisite medical assistance – for those still in need of surgical interventions – and offer vocational training to survivors who lost limbs, the deaf and the blind to enable them to restart their lives again and that the Kenyan government would support the pursuance of reparations from the U.S. government. Despite frequent visits by Walla and his team to the PM’s office, the promises were never fulfilled. Walla, who kept on promising that the PM would honour his word, soon lost favour with his officials and the association. He was seen as another ‘big-talking’<sup>146</sup> Luo, just like Raila. Ethnic favouritism was also witnessed in the way Walla shared job advertisement notices forwarded to him on a weekly basis by Pamela Slutz, the U.S. Embassy Deputy Chief of Mission, for opportunities<sup>147</sup> at the U.S. Embassy, the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and USAID that were to be applied for by survivors and victims’ families with the requisite qualifications. Instead, Walla forwarded these notices only to his relatives and community.<sup>148</sup> This engendered disaffection by the members and the decision to vote him out was reached in a meeting held on the 8<sup>th</sup> April 2010. He however refused to hand over to Mr Mwadama, the newly- elected chair and continued his forays to the PM’s office, purporting to be the chair. When I attended the 14<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2012, Mr Walla had

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<sup>144</sup> A Luo but in his team were two Kikuyu, a Luhya and a Kamba, namely, Simon Kingori, Grace Kiuna, Winnie Wamau and Douglas Sidialo respectively.

<sup>145</sup> Mr Walla claimed to have convinced the PM to attend because of his personal (perhaps ethnic) connection. Personal interview (Nairobi, 7<sup>th</sup> August 2012).

<sup>146</sup> A common stereotype of the Luo in Kenya.

<sup>147</sup> As the embassy did not have jobs to offer, one way of assisting those with the relevant qualifications was in notifying them of job opportunities in order that they applied just like anybody else. Job vacancies in these organizations are internally advertised.

<sup>148</sup> Email communication from Pamela Slutz to Paul Walla dated 25<sup>th</sup> February, 2009.

still not accepted to hand over the association's books of accounts and other official documents. To demonstrate his hold on power, he had prepared a separate speech as chair, which he went ahead and read. In the same year, he formed a splinter organization, Seventh August, 1998 Bomb Blast Victims Association, which drew members from his Luo ethnic community and their Luhya neighbours.

In this section, I have demonstrated through examples the existence of entrenched ethnicity in the leadership of ASBVA to support the observation that politicised ethnic identity is a Kenyan reality. That it was evident in the events after the August 7<sup>th</sup> 1998 bombing is not surprising as it mirrors the '*ethnicalised*' nature of politics at the national leadership level. With such wrangling in the leadership of ASBVA, does the Documentation Centre envisage itself playing any role in working towards a unified nation where Kenyan identity would come before ethnic identity? Does it see itself promoting programmes aimed at cultivating and entrenching a culture of peace and amicable reconciliation to conflict? The next section examines the activities of the Peace Builder's Kids Club to ascertain the extent to which these aspirations, consistent with the objectives of the Documentation Centre, are being met.

### **5.3.3. The Peace Builder's Kids Club**

In establishing the Documentation Centre, the trustees of the August 7<sup>th</sup> Memorial Park had conceived a centre whose mandate would include propagating an amicable approach to conflict reconciliation at the local, regional and international level. While no time-frame was given for the commencement of this expanded role, it was assumed that this would be determined by the strategic interests of the Memorial Park's management based on the availability of funds. From this mandate, the management in 2007 initiated a programme called 'Children as Peace Builder's' whose main objective was "to offer education that would promote peace building among children through simple and practical programmes".<sup>149</sup> The key elements of the education programme, as stated in the Memorial Parks' official BlogSpot,<sup>150</sup> were:

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<sup>149</sup> August 7<sup>th</sup> Memorial Park official brochure.

<sup>150</sup> <http://august7thmemorial.blogspot.co.uk/2013/06/peace-builders-kids-club.html#more>

to nurture a culture of peace at individual and community level; promote forgiveness and compassion; break the cycle of violence and replace it with new ways of dealing with conflict and developing peace initiatives.

After successfully running the peace education programme for six months, the programme was converted to a club, the Peace Builder's Kids Club (PBKC).



Fig. 5.3: Kenyan Industrialist, Manu Chandaria (centre), together with some children and the Memorial Park's General Manager, Ms. Amunga, during the launch of the Peace Builder's Kids Club in 2007.  
(Photo: August 7<sup>th</sup> Memorial Park)

Since their establishment in 2007, PBKC have established clubs in 51 schools in the counties of Nairobi and Uasin Gishu.<sup>151</sup> This study, however, only focuses on club activities in ten schools in Uasin Gishu because this county has previously experienced ethnic clashes since the re-introduction of multiparty democracy in Kenya in the early 1990s. It is in this county, rather than Nairobi, that this study is able to demonstrate the relevance of PBKC in contributing to peace building, reconciliation and efforts towards fostering a Kenyan national identity. The selected clubs are in schools located in areas that are considered as ethnic

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<sup>151</sup> Uasin Gishu County is in northern Rift Valley. Also see Appendix 6 for list of schools with registered PKBC.

clashes ‘hotspots’ such as Langas, Kiambaa<sup>152</sup> and Tarakwa<sup>153</sup> in Eldoret North and Eldoret South constituencies, see tab 5.1, involving mainly the Kalenjin and Kikuyu communities.<sup>154</sup>



Fig.5.4: Map of Uasin Gishu County.  
Source: Maps of the World, 2013.

Before discussing the activities of the PBKC, it is necessary to clarify the link between one of the most active proponents of the clubs to the 1998 Nairobi terror attack. Sometime in September, 2007 Richard Mibei, a teacher at Tarakwa Primary School in Uasin Gishu

<sup>152</sup> It was in Kiambaa that over 30 members of the Kikuyu community, seeking refuge inside the Kenya Assemblies of God (KAG) church, were burnt to death by ‘Kalenjin Warriors’ at the height of the Kenyan post-election violence on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January, 2008.

<sup>153</sup> Previously known as ‘Burnt Forest’ but changed after the 2007/8 ethnic clashes as the Kikuyu and Kalenjin communities felt that the literal meaning of the name was being put into practice through the torching of houses in every election.

<sup>154</sup> Refer to Part II, of this chapter for an in-depth discussion of ethnicity in Kenya.

brought his Class Eight<sup>155</sup> pupils to Nairobi on a school trip. One of the places in their itinerary was a visit to the August 7th Memorial Park. He selected the Memorial Park for he was aware of the existence of the ‘Children as Peace Builder’s’ education programme and wanted his pupils to learn about peace and reconciliation, as his school was located in an area that had suffered ethnic clashes in the past. He himself was a survivor of the attack, though was lucky to have sustained only minor injuries. On the day of the bombing, he was at the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) offices<sup>156</sup> in Nairobi on an official assignment.

On arrival at the Memorial Park, Ms Gatwiri,<sup>157</sup> as always, received the school and gave them a tour of the Documentation Centre where they learnt of the terror attack and its impact through the photographs, objects and artworks on display. Artefacts in a memorial museum, Williams (2007:25) posits, are important “...not only because they give displays a powerful appeal, but also because in many cases they exist as tangible proof in the face of debate about, and even denial of, what transpired.” It was necessary that the group believe and appreciate the nature of tragedy that befell their country in 1998. They also watched the video ‘Seconds from Disaster’ which documents the 1998 bombing tragedy as it unfolded. The pupils were then exposed to artworks by other students before being given art materials – crayons, pencils, papers and plasticine – and tasked to create two and three-dimensional objects depicting the importance of cultivating peace amongst all humanity. The art pieces created by these pupils were poignant in their peace symbolism.

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<sup>155</sup> This is the last class of primary school before the pupils proceed to secondary school, on average these students would be 14 years old.

<sup>156</sup> TSC offices were located in the Cooperative Bank Building a block away from the bombed U.S. Embassy building.

<sup>157</sup> Education Coordinator at the Centre.



Fig.5.5: *Peace in Kenya.*  
Rachel Wanjiku (undated), Crayon on paper.

This formulation captures the key elements that informed the establishment of the Peace Builder's Kids Club. The map of Kenya, complete with colours of the national flag, symbolizes nationalism and the Kenyan identity. On the top left and right side of this artwork are school children, arguably expressing their desire for peace as encapsulated in the words 'Kenya is Love,' 'Peace in Kenya'. Their inclusion in this formulation accords with the club's stated objective of inculcating a culture of peace-building in children. The chick in the top middle symbolizes the innocence of the children, and arguably Kenya, to have been hit by an act of terror.



Fig.5.6: *How long shall I cry.*  
Abdul, St Aquinas High School (undated), Pencil on paper.

The piece by Abdul of Aquinas captures the suffering engendered by the bombing tragedy. It is a representation of the ‘silent cries’ that many of the survivors continue to bear. The cry for justice, compensation, healing and understanding has been calling for attention and healing to bring closure to the trauma.

As Ms Gatwiri and Mr Mibei discussed these pieces, they realized that these artworks could be used to teach peace, tolerance, reconciliation, and national identity in schools. Since these subjects were not taught in the school curricula, they proposed that a club could help actualize the idea of peace building in schools, as pupils from distant places away from Nairobi would not make it to the Documentation Centre. The idea dovetailed with the plans of the management of the August Seventh Memorial Park hence the origins of the PBKC.

The club targets children aged between 10 and 15 years in classes six, seven and eight. Since the inception of the clubs in 2007, 2500 pupils from both public and private schools have participated in the clubs’ activities. A two-pronged implementation strategy was designed by

the Memorial Park management, which took into consideration the need to have activities going on at the Documentation Centre while others would be school-based.

This study was designed to answer one overarching question: what role has the Peace Builder's Kids Club played in peace building, ethnic reconciliation and fostering a Kenyan identity? Purposive sampling field techniques were used in selecting the 10 schools on the basis of the active involvement of Ms Gatwiri and Mr Mibei in guiding their activities through their respective patrons. Mibei was particularly instrumental in the establishment of PBKC in his Uasin Gishu County. Focussed group discussions consisting of between 10 and 14 pupils, including their patrons, and structured questions were used to elicit data discussed in this section.

At the beginning of each school calendar year in January, the management of the Documentation Centre through the Education Coordinator introduces between two and three themes to the clubs' patrons to be discussed and adopted in a Patrons' Summit.<sup>158</sup> The summit adopts and develops a possible list of activities to interpret the theme. The patrons are, however, given a free hand to derive club activities from these broad themes that they may deem suitable to their local contexts. Themes for the past three years have included Water, Environment and Trees; National Values (patriotism, unity, justice, peace, diversity, value-based leadership, hard work and integrity) and; Coping with tragedies.

Whereas there are strong connections between the environment and peace (Maathai, 2003; Mische, 1989), I elect to focus on the peace building and conflict reconciliation initiatives, which are most applicable to this discussion.

#### **5.3.4 Peace and Conflict Reconciliation Education**

One of the most significant programmes of PBKC is its peace and conflict reconciliation education. In all the sampled clubs, pupils are trained on ways of building peace and resolving conflicts in their schools, home and within their community. Teachers, social workers, youth leaders and members of the clergy, who act as role models in their society, are

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<sup>158</sup> The summit is basically a workshop for all club patrons and education staff working at the Documentation Centre where the clubs' previous year's activities are evaluated and new ones planned for the new school year.



invited to these schools - at least once a month - to talk to the club members of the importance of peace. Sharing of personal experiences is an important component of what is expected of them. The pupils are then asked to give examples of conflicts they have experienced and how they resolved them. The session leader then take the pupils through a discussion of the various conflict scenarios – ranging from fights among pupils to those involving the youth and ethnic violence – and the possible ways they could be handled.

Explaining different forms of violence and providing information about alternatives to violence is a common approach in peace education (Hariss, 2004:6). This study found that pupils from Uasin Gishu County made frequent reference to the 2008 post-election violence by stating how it affected them and were keen to learn how such conflicts could be prevented. One example that this study found poignant in delivering the peace message is the story<sup>159</sup> of Mrs Josephine Wambugu, a social worker living in Cheplosgei. She was a widowed Kikuyu woman who had been married to a Kalenjin and had lived in the area for over 20 years. The ethnic divide in 2007/8 was so deep that in some areas individuals married from outside their communities had to choose between their community and their wives. Josephine had chosen to remain behind as she thought she was fully integrated to the community of Cheplosgei. She shared with the pupils a personal incident that happened in mid-January 2008 when violence reached her home area. One afternoon while at home, she spotted at a distance of about 600 metres a crowd of about 30 people moving towards her home while shouting. She could figure out that they were armed, possibly with clubs, bows and arrows among other weapons, perhaps having the intention to attack and destroy her property to force her to flee, as had happened with many others in the division. Aware of the looming danger on her life and property, she took four gourds-full of milk and proceeded to place them at the gate in the direction of the group's approach. She garlanded the gourds with strands of Kikuyu grass<sup>160</sup> and returned to lock herself in the house. When the attackers reached her gate, they drank the milk and turned away. Josephine explains that she resorted to her knowledge of Kalenjin traditions and customs by invoking their peace symbols to stop the attackers from executing their plan. Milk is sacred to the Kalenjin community (Somjee, 1998) and is shared as an expression of friendship while Kikuyu grass is a peace symbol. By sharing this experience, she emphasises the need to learn, respect and appreciate the cultures of ones' neighbours. It is

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<sup>159</sup> The story was narrated to us by one of the club members of Cheplosgei Primary School.

<sup>160</sup> Its scientific name is *Pennisetum clandestinum*

by appreciating your neighbours' culture that integration can be achieved, an important ingredient to peaceful co-existence (Salomon, 2002).

In the sampled clubs, the pupils were taught the value of respecting diversity, embracing dialogue and adherence to regulations - from school rules, edicts by the community to the national laws – as an important first step towards peace building and reconciliation of conflict at all levels. Club members also went out to their local community on monthly outreach missions, which entailed preaching messages of peace, encouraging amicable reconciliation to conflict through dialogue and peer counselling. They employed both visual and performing art such as poetry, drama, and music to convey their messages to their audiences in the neighbourhood and on special occasions like the parents' days, prize giving days and the August 7<sup>th</sup> Memorial Day, which the clubs observe.

A piece by Natalie and Chelsea, standard seven pupils at Koiluget Primary School, encapsulates the prevailing peace in the area in 2010 after the inter-ethnic violence that followed the contested presidential and parliamentary elections of 2008. The white dove with an olive twig in its beak is a common peace symbol<sup>161</sup> in the West that has been widely adopted in local contexts. The flower is a common symbol for expressing love, a necessary ingredient for peaceful coexistence.

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<sup>161</sup> See footnote 57 for an interpretation of this symbol.



Fig.5.7: *We live in peace love and unity.*  
Natalie and Chelsea (2010), Crayon on paper.

The use of role models to teach and share experiences in peace building and conflict reconciliation inculcates a culture of peace to these young minds. In discussing the critical role of education in the quest for peaceful inter-ethnic co-existence in the Africa Great-Lakes region, Ndura-Ouedraogo (2009:44) posits that, “when children are educated about peace-building, nothing will prevent them from following the teachings because they will grow up with these lessons in mind”. Arguably, peaceful dispositions in leadership later in life are developed in childhood.

Evidence obtained from the club patrons, education staff of the Documentation Centre and these schools’ neighbouring communities suggests a positive impact of this programme. The patrons, for instance, attested to reduced incidences of bullying and fighting in school, while the Tarakwa Primary School’s Parents Teachers Association chair, proclaimed an improved relationship amongst the school community – parents, teachers and the pupils.

### 5.3.5 Stereotyping Ethnicity

As has been demonstrated in this chapter, politicised ethnicity pervades many facets of Kenyan society and is manifest in various ways. For instance, since the advent of multiparty democracy in 1992, national elections have provided the clearest evidence of the inflammation of ethnic feeling resulting in inter-ethnic violence. Presidential elections have been particularly divisive as they epitomize ethnic competitions with the expectation that the winning candidate would share the spoils of power with members of his own ethnic community. Thus in rallies, electronic and print media the politicians rally support of their own ethnic community first, while warning against the dangers of voting for a different community's candidate. The appeal to ethnic solidarity is always supported by portrayal of the competing candidate, and indeed his or her entire ethnic community, in very disparaging terms. The build up to the 2007 elections provides one such example when tribal feeling was instigated to create a climate of intense tribal identification, animosity and hatred that culminated in the now infamous 2008 post-election violence. It is arguable that in such a highly charged atmosphere of ethnic survival where opposing communities are only defined in negative stereotypes, the very idea of a shared national identity is highly problematized. It is to the creation of these negative ethnic stereotypes that I now turn.

The negative stereotypes of communities competing on the opposite sides of the political divide during the 2007 Kenyan elections were so widespread that in certain regions, such as parts of the Rift Valley, Nyanza, Central province and some Nairobi estates – those predominantly inhabited by single ethnic communities – the portraits created easily became synonymous with the enemy, with the additional notation that they should be vanquished. In the Rift Valley, for instance, Kikuyu were referred to by the Kalenjin as spots (*madoadoa*), weeds (*kwekwe*), enemy (*bunyot*), thieves (*chorik*) who needed to be 'uprooted.' Conversely, they referred to the Kalenjin as killers (*orogani*), rapists (*munyiaga atumia kia hinya*), primitive (*acurie*), drunkards (*muriu*) and cattle-rustlers who did not deserve such farmland. Hence in the two waves of violence in 2007 and 2008, the first seeking the displacement and punishment of the Kikuyu and the second seeking retribution of the Kikuyu against Luo and the Kalenjin, neighbour turned against neighbour. Kenya was on the brink of the precipice,

split between Kikuyu and non-Kikuyu where the very concept of Kenyan-ness was under threat. Undoubtedly, these stereotypes fanned the hatred and the subsequent conflict.

Patrons of the 10 Schools in Tarakwa zone were unanimous in asserting that in the run up to the 2007 elections, during the post-election violence and the period before the restoration of calm, which enabled the displaced persons to return home, school children were prejudiced against members of the 'other' ethnic community. One would be tempted to ask, how did children in primary school aged between 10 and 15 years develop negative attitudes towards a group or members of a group that they had grown up together with as neighbours and were even attending the same school and church? Children not only learn by copying adults but also from the events in their environment. Levi and Hughes (1966: 23) affirm that children's attitudes can either reflect their obvious mimicry of the behaviour of others or their true attitude as taught in their environment. Applied to this study, this suggests that children from Tarakwa zone must have learnt the stereotypes from their elder siblings, parents and other members of their respective ethnic communities. Their attitudes towards the 'other' community mimicked what prevailed in their environment.

Realizing the dangers these negative stereotypes were having on their students, the club patrons embarked on a programme to debunk them. Mr Mibei stated that all the patrons in the ten neighbouring schools started teaching their members the basic customs and cultural practices of both the Kikuyu and the Kalenjin, their histories and how some, like the Kikuyu, ended up in the Rift Valley. They also focussed on their shared identities: attend the same school, speak Kiswahili as a common language, their foodstuff and clothing are not different. In contexts where conflicts are identity-based and belonging to a different group is treated as enmity, multi-cultural education becomes necessary in eliminating adversarial mind-sets. Challenging stereotypes breaks down enemy images and changes perceptions and ways of relating to the other group (Reardon, 1997; Salomon, 2002). The clubs reached out to their larger school communities – fellow pupils, teachers and parents – through poems, skits, drama and songs to challenge existing stereotypes. They again used occasions such as parents' day, club's day, prize-giving days, tree-planting occasions and any other events in the school and the neighbourhood to deflate the negative stereotypes.

In a survey conducted in 2013 to ascertain the veracity of the club patrons’ statement that negative stereotypes had been reduced as a result of the activities of the PBKC,<sup>162</sup> the pupils were asked to write what they thought of any other ethnic community, other than their own, in their school and the neighbourhood. Their responses were categorized into two: one, a positive remark if they gave information about the said community that was in a good light and accurate; and two, a negative response if the remark painted the said community in a bad light, an overgeneralization or the information was deemed inaccurate. The responses for the 10 clubs in Uasin Gishu are as tabulated below:

Table.5.2: Pupils’ perception of other ethnic communities in Uasin Gishu County.

Type of response	No of respondents	%
Positive response	114	89.76
Negative response	13	10.24
Total respondents	127	

These findings reveal a very positive perception of other ethnic communities in Uasin Gishu County. The patrons of the PBKC in the schools referred to above identified the reduction of stereotypes in their areas as one of the clubs’ success stories. The comments elicited in Uasin Gishu, for instance, did not identify anything negative between the two predominant communities – Kikuyu and Kalenjin – in the areas sampled; instead, the Turkana and Pokot were negatively portrayed as a result of a generalization concerning their cattle-rustling activities. These results are not surprising as they are a reflection of the prevailing political trends both at the local and national level. It is arguable that the teaming up by the Kalenjin and the Kikuyu in one political alliance, the Jubilee Alliance, in the 2013 national elections and their subsequent win was positively received by these two communities, hence this positive evaluation.

Stereotypes, Taylor (1981:163) asserts, “can be an important mechanism for recognizing and expressing ethnicity, and to the extent they are accurate reflections, and refer to positive attributes of the stereotyped group, stereotypes can play a constructive role in inter-group

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<sup>162</sup> These observations are based on the general experiences these patrons have had of their students in this zone since 2008.

relations". Patrons in Uasin Gishu have used the clubs to promote the understanding of each other's cultures for harmonious inter-ethnic relations. From the data elicited in this study, it is my supposition that the PBKC have contributed to a reduction of negative stereotyping of communities in their schools and neighbouring communities in Uasin Gishu County. It is a model that could be replicated in other counties in order to promote inter-ethnic understanding as a prerequisite to achieving a national unity and identity.

## **Part IV Conclusion**

The bombing of the United States of America embassy in Nairobi on the 7<sup>th</sup> August 1998 witnessed Kenyans in all walks of life responding to the unfolding tragedy in unprecedented ways. Ethnic and political differences were cast aside as leaders and ordinary citizens came together in a real demonstration of unity and patriotism. However, in an ironical turn of events, ethnic bigotry soon emerged when the print media focussed almost exclusively on the rescue of two Kikuyu victims, Rose Wanjiku and Sammy Nganga (Obwogo, 1999). Beyond the rescue period, ethnicity continued rearing its head in the leadership of the ASBVA, an association formed to cater for the welfare of the surviving bomb blast victims.

Using this incident, this chapter undertook a historical overview of politicised ethnicity in Kenya to demonstrate that it is a deeply ingrained problem whose roots are traceable to the colonial period but which continued through the Kenyatta regime (1963-1978), then Daniel arap Moi's (1978-2002) and finally to the Kibaki (2003-2013) presidency. The *ethnicization* of politics through the three regimes has seriously impacted on Kenya's socio-economic and political development. The post-election violence of 2007 to early 2008, in the aftermath of which 1300 people were killed and another 600,000 displaced and which took a notably ethnic angle, was instrumental in refocusing the activities of the Peace Builder's Kids Club and the development of new programmes on reconciling the nation. The main argument in this chapter is that despite the deeply entrenched nature of politicised ethnicity in Kenya, the Documentation Centre through the PBKC has played a role in peace building, conflict reconciliation and the cultivation of national identity. Children, as has been canvassed, are better placed to play this role, as they are yet to develop fixed mind-sets and stereotypes of other communities. The PBKC was thus established with the view of influencing change

within their schools and neighbouring communities. While children are said to learn from their parents/elders, the converse is equally true. It is against this premise that the activities of the PBKC are to be understood.

This chapter has discussed the contributions of the PBKC in Uasin Gishu County in peace building and conflict reconciliation. As has been demonstrated, having a positive attitude towards members of a different community promotes inter-ethnic understanding, an important recipe for fostering cohesion and projection of national identity. Fieldwork data from club patrons suggest that, unlike in 2008 and 2009 when their pupils held negative prejudice against other communities, the clubs have influenced these prejudices and turned them from negative to positive. The testimony of teacher Crispine Owako<sup>163</sup> that “the clubs have had an extremely positive influence because it started when the neighbourhood was full of tribalism but at the moment the club members have helped in spreading the peace messages thereby people around co-exist positively” supports my argument.

Lastly, this chapter has indicated that at the end of the tour of the Documentation Centre, children are given art materials and asked to create pieces of art that encapsulates their perceptions of peace. As demonstrated, the clubs are moving in a positive direction. This study has additionally revealed that members of the PBKC perform drama, dance and recite poems during their outreach missions to the community and on important school days such as parents and prize-giving days. This supports this thesis argument that visual and performing art play a critical role in mediating trauma of the 1998 terror attack and that these media are also applicable in peacebuilding, conflict reconciliation, fostering cohesion and in projection of national identity.

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<sup>163</sup> A club patron at Langas Primary School in Eldoret Municipality.



## Chapter 6: Post-1998: The Escalation of Terrorism in Kenya

### 6.0. Introduction

The Kenyan Muslim population according to the 2009 national census is estimated at 4.3 million people and constitute about 11% of the total Kenyan population of 38.6 million people.<sup>164</sup> The Muslim community is concentrated in the coastal counties of Mombasa, Lamu, Kilifi and Kwale; north-eastern counties of Garissa, Wajir and Mandera; and Marsabit and Isiolo counties in the former Eastern Province. Nairobi is also home to a sizable population of Muslims who are mainly concentrated in the suburbs of Eastleigh, Pumwani, Majengo and Kibra. Other major towns in the country such as Nakuru, Kisumu, Machakos and Eldoret also have sizable pockets of Muslim populations. Terrorism activities have, however, mainly been carried out in Nairobi, Mombasa, Garissa, Wajir and Mandera counties.<sup>165</sup>

Collection of data for this chapter was undertaken between October and December 2013 in fieldwork in Nairobi's Pumwani-Eastleigh area, Pate's Siyu, Kwale and Mombasa. The selection of these areas was informed by their link to suspected perpetrators of the 1998 Nairobi terror attack, and more recently, Al Shabaab-linked Islamic radicalisation and terrorism acts. Whereas the north eastern region has been a major theatre of terrorism, it was not possible to undertake any studies there, though fieldwork in Nairobi's Pumwani-Eastleigh area yielded useful data that demonstrated its connection to other wider terror networks in Nairobi and Somalia. Three purposively selected focus groups participated in the discussions in three sessions that lasted for three to four hours per group. Key informant interviews were also conducted. The main focus of the inquiry was their understanding of the origins of terrorism in Kenya, factors contributing to its escalation and its impacts on Islamic identity and interfaith relations in Kenya.

Terrorism activities in Kenya have escalated in the aftermath of the August 7<sup>th</sup> 1998 bombing of the United States of America embassy in Nairobi. This escalation has mainly been triggered by counter-terrorism strategies developed by the U.S. government and its

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<sup>164</sup> Kenya National Bureau of Statistics 2009 Census results.

<sup>165</sup> See appendix 3 for map of Kenyan counties

subsequent designation of Kenya as a 'strategic' partner in the fight against terrorism in the Horn of Africa (Mogire & Agade, 2011). Prodded by the U.S., Kenya has implemented activities perceived to be anti-Islamic hence attracting opposition, some of it violent, from local and international Muslim groups and opponents of the U.S. The perception of terrorism as relating to "far-and-removed happenings" associated with foreign places such as Lebanon, Beirut, Jerusalem, Cairo, and so on, that many had previously encountered on evening television and radio news, had changed. Terrorism targets had moved closer to home to become part of the Kenyan reality.

This chapter is divided into three parts: Part I, "Mapping the territory and the escalation of terrorism", examines the recent introduction of terrorism in Kenya focussing on the activities of one Fazul Abdullah Mohammed, the nexus of terrorist activities in eastern Africa. This part also analyses the factors that have contributed to this escalation. Part II, "Radicalisation and Appropriation of Islamic identity," builds on the analyses presented in Part I to argue that the broad historical, political and economic factors affecting the Muslim community in Kenya have been seized by radical Islamic preachers and used to manipulate and indoctrinate the youth to embrace extremist ideologies espoused by militant organizations such as the Muslim Youth Centre and Al Shabaab. The terror attacks, some targeting churches, have threatened Christian-Muslim relations and the aspirations for national unity in Kenya. Part III summarises what has been discussed in the chapter.

This chapter's main thrust is to demonstrate that cases of terrorism perpetrated by extremist Islamic organizations have escalated post the 7<sup>th</sup> August 1998 Nairobi terror attack and to explore the possible underlying causes of this escalation. This has engendered a perception that Muslims in general support terrorism and hence the suspicious treatment of an Islamic identity in Kenya. Continued acts of terrorism and counter-terrorism measures instituted by the government have not boded well for interfaith relations and are a threat to Kenya's tenuous nationalism and identity.

## Part I: Mapping the Territory and the Escalation of Terrorism

### 6.1.1. The Fazul Abdullah Mohammed Connection

The journey towards understanding the increased spate of terrorism in Kenya in recent history goes back to the 1998 terrorist attack on the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi, and specifically to one man, Fazul Abdullah Mohammed<sup>166</sup> also known as Abdul Karim or Harun Fazul, the Al Qaeda operative who co-ordinated the Nairobi terror attack. His signature on many terrorism activities in the region was so evident as to have influenced the U.S. resolve to have him captured no matter its implications as encapsulated by this statement in Prestholdt (2009:453), asserting that “Fazul has been a public rationale for U.S. counter-terrorism aid to African governments and even for the military intervention in Somalia.” His story is the strand that ties together the 1998 Nairobi terror attack, the 2002 Mombasa attacks on Paradise Hotel in Kikambala, and the Somali-based Al Shabaab terrorist group Kenyan attacks. It is to the story of Fazul Abdullah that I now turn.

Fazul Abdullah, a Comorian citizen born in 1972, travelled to Pakistan in 1990 on a study scholarship. He however dropped out of school to join an Al Qaeda training camp in Pakistan, where he met Osama bin Laden and was indoctrinated with the ideologies of Al Qaeda. He returned to Africa in the mid-1990s and travelled widely in countries within the Horn of Africa before moving to Kenya in 1997 to lead<sup>167</sup> the coordination of the U.S. Embassy bombing on August 7<sup>th</sup> 1998, which, as we have discussed, resulted in the death of over 200 people and injury of over 5000 others. After the bombing, he visited Comoro, United Arab Emirates and perhaps returned to Pakistan (Prestholdt, 2009; Vittori *et al*, 2009). It is significant to note that it is the attack on the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi rather than 9/11 in New York City that prompted the declaration of war on Al Qaeda by George Tenet, the then director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), (Tenet & Harlow, 2007).

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<sup>166</sup> This man used over 10 aliases to conceal his identity.

<sup>167</sup> This was occasioned by the death of Abu Ubayda Al Banshiri, Bin Laden’s then deputy, in a ferry accident on Lake Victoria in 1996.

He returned to Kenya in 2001 arriving in Siyu where he introduced himself as Abdul Karim, an Islamic preacher who had felt the urge to preach to the villagers. Within a few months of his arrival, he had assembled a team along the Kenya-Somalia coastline and islands, between Mogadishu and Mombasa, to coordinate the attack on the Israeli-owned Paradise Hotel in Kikambala, Mombasa and the attempted shooting down of an Israel-bound private jet on 28th November 2002. He settled on Lamu's remote northern island of Pate in Siyu where he integrated and was introduced by Sheikh Aboud Rogo<sup>168</sup> to his future wife, Amina Kubwa, daughter of Mohammed Kubwa Seif, the local councillor, hence establishing kinship with the local leadership who would guarantee him security. The choice of Lamu as a launching pad for the attack is crucial: its geographical proximity to Somalia with its easy access via the ocean or by land across the porous Kenyan-Somalia border; and the existing bonds of history with the Middle East, facilitating the movement of terrorist agents within and across the region (Kagwanja, 2010; Rosenau, 2005). In keeping with the local fishing traditions, Abdul Karim established a lobster fishing business<sup>169</sup> to provide cover for his clandestine activities. According to Issa Mohammed,<sup>170</sup> also a fisherman, Abdul Karim, worked many, and at times odd, hours venturing out to the deep-sea where only the very skilled and experienced fishermen dared. He engaged him together with two other local youth in his fishing business and sometimes spent time with them when not working. Issa was among those arrested by Kenyan detectives between November 2002 and May 2003 when the hunt for Abdul Karim and his co-conspirators was initiated. In hindsight, Issa thinks that the deep-sea fishing voyages must have been a cover to network with other conspirators, receive items for the assembly of his bombs and to gain mastery of the ocean that would become necessary for the escape to Somalia after the Mombasa bombings.<sup>171</sup> The small, relatively fast, fibre-glass-fabricated motor boats, like the ones used by Abdul Karim in his fishing business, have become the vessel of choice for moving a small group of people and arms to-and-from

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<sup>168</sup> A Siyu-born Islamic cleric who was based in Mombasa and came to prominence in 2002, when alongside his father-in-law and brother-in-law, Mohammed Kubwa Seif and Mohammed Kubwa respectively were charged with the Paradise Hotel bombing in Kikambala. Sheikh Rogo dropped out of primary school to pursue Islamic education in a madrassa in Siyu before proceeding to Mombasa to advance his Islamic education. He only came to prominence after the killing of Fazul in 2011. Police sources believe that he took over the leadership of Al Qaeda in the region after the killing of Fazul. (The Standard 3<sup>rd</sup> September, 2013)

<sup>169</sup> Al Qaeda provided capital to several members of his team to set up similar fishing ventures along the Kenyan coast.

<sup>170</sup> Personal Interview, Siyu 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2012.

<sup>171</sup> Kenyan investigators believe that the terrorists that survived the Kikambala attack regrouped in Lamu before escaping to Somalia.

Somalia. Indeed a draft United Nations report (UN Security Council, 2003) confirms that the perpetrators of the Kikambala attacks in Mombasa in November 2002 used similar vessels: *MV Midrarah* and *MV Sauda*, vessels that our informants confirmed having seen in Siyu within the same period. A few weeks prior to the Mombasa attacks, Abdul Karim moved to Mombasa, where he lived in the Saba Saba neighbourhood and worshipped at Masjid Musa mosque,<sup>172</sup> as did About Rogo.

After the attacks the surviving members of the team, including Abdul Karim, escaped to Lamu then on to lawless Somalia, where Al Qaeda maintains training camps for its recruits under Abdul Karim, then its East African coordinator (Joshua, 2004). In Somalia, they worked with and got protection from organizations such as Al-Ittihad-Al-Islammiya (AIAI), a long-standing Somali militant group that later folded into the Islamic Court Union (ICU) and strove to root out the U.S.-backed Transitional Federal Government (TFG) (Stewart, 2012; The Standard Newspaper 5.08.2008). ICU's reign in Somalia was short-lived; Ethiopian forces – with the support of the African Union - invaded Somalia in December 2006 leading to its disintegration in early 2007. Many of its hard-core elements, including Fazul, joined the ICU youth wing, Al Shabaab, to become a separate military organization. As the ICU was being driven out of Mogadishu, Prestholdt (2009), quoting Pentagon sources, avers that the U.S. intelligence presumed that Fazul was trying to escape from Somalia with a contingent of ICU fighters. Thus, a deployment of Special Forces was sent to eliminate him together with other Al Qaeda members, a mission that failed as none of its top barons was killed. Henceforth, Al Shabaab continued retaliatory attacks against Kenya and Ethiopia for supporting the U.S.-backed invasion and counter-terrorism initiatives in the region. It is against this background that Kenya deployed two military battalions and teamed up with U.S. and British forces to patrol the Kenya-Somalia border and the Indian Ocean to prevent any terrorist infiltration into Kenya. Henceforth, Somalia became a major focus for Kenya's counter-terrorism strategies (Kariuki, 2003; West, 2006; Rabasa, 2009). The U.S. equally viewed Somalia as a potential breeding ground, safe haven and transit point for terrorists (Mogire & Agade, 2011; Lyman & Morrison, 2009).

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<sup>172</sup> This mosque has in the last few years acquired a reputation for its radical sermons and frequent clashes with the police.

Abdul Karim taught at the Shanga na Uti madrassa and worshipped in any of the nine mosques of Siyu and is reputed to have even started a local football club which he named Kandahar,<sup>173</sup> which competed with the island's other team, Al Qaeda,<sup>174</sup> and played as the goalkeeper in the latter team (Joshua, 2004; Rosenau, 2005). While not teaching soccer, Abdul Karim recruited local Siyuan residents to join Al Qaeda, both Kenyan and FBI investigators allege. His recruits identified with his brand of Islamic fundamentalism – which stood out but were largely ignored by the locals. Ali Mohammed<sup>175</sup> stated that Karim ‘did not want them praying near graves or celebrating Maulidi’<sup>176</sup> – practices that are common along the Lamu coast. Suspected-terrorist recruits<sup>177</sup> associated with Abdul Karim include the fiery Mombasa-based street preacher Sheikh Aboud Rogo, Saleh Ali Saleh, Ali Nabhan, Ibrahim Rogo, Mohammed Kubwa Seif, Mohammed Kubwa, and Sheikh Abubakar alias Makaburi.<sup>178</sup> Some of these people were seen in the island of Pate in Siyu variously, prior to and immediately after, the Kikambala terror attacks. Some of them – for instance the Kubwas – were eventually arrested and charged before Kenyan courts for conspiracy to commit murder based on evidence demonstrating their involvement in the Kikambala terror attacks.

Fazul is said to have also masterminded an attempted attack on the new U.S. Embassy in Nairobi in June 2003 by deploying a light aircraft with the intent of bombing it, a plan that was foiled by Kenyan security forces (Cilliers, 2010; Rosenau, 2005). In this attack, just like the Mombasa ones, Al Qaeda cells located in and operating from Somalia participated. From this study, it was apparent that Al Qaeda used the various remote islands in Lamu as plotting and sheltering spots for the two Mombasa attacks. It is to these islands that they also escaped en route to Somalia where their main training bases are situated. In the region, Al Qaeda has established ‘terror centres’, and as many as 10-15 ‘ sleeper cells’ in Kenya alone (Rosenau, 2005).

It is these terror attacks of 2002 that reinforced concerns that East Africa was increasingly becoming a breeding ground for Al Qaeda terrorists, prompting President George Bush to re-evaluate American foreign policy on Africa with security becoming one of its critical

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<sup>173</sup> Fazul received his training in Afghanistan's Kandahar and Somalia.

<sup>174</sup> The choice of these names apparently raised no suspicion with the local security.

<sup>175</sup> A local fisherman, personal interview, Siyu, 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2013.

<sup>176</sup> Celebrations to mark the birth of Prophet Mohammed.

<sup>177</sup> Though some of them were arrested and charged in court, they were not convicted for lack of evidence.

<sup>178</sup> Shot dead by unknown assailants on 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2014.

components (Morgan, 2009; Vittori *et al*, 2009). It is arguable that President George Bush was reading from a similar script to Tenet's when he declared the global war on terror in the aftermath of the September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 attacks in the U.S.

The foregoing has demonstrated the centrality of Fazul in perpetrating acts of terror in Kenya. While he participated in the planning and execution of the 1998 bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi, the Mombasa attacks in 2002 and the thwarted attack on the new U.S. Embassy in 2003, it is possible to suggest that he inspired/encouraged the Al Shabaab group to attack the Kenyan targets in an effort to frustrate their efforts in pursuing him into Somalia. The counter-terrorism initiatives begun in the region in 2003 were in no doubt linked to Fazul's escalation of terrorist activities.

Fazul was killed in Somalia when he mistakenly drove into a security roadblock and refused to stop, forcing security forces to spray his vehicle with bullets, killing him instantly. His death was as brutal as that he had inflicted on hundreds of others and was celebrated by the local victims more than that of Osama Bin Laden, as he was the mastermind of the terror attacks. A survivor of the Kikambala bombing attack, Lucy Aringo, stated that, "though his death may seem like a little thing, it gives peace to my soul and in a way provides closure to my trauma" (Mutiga, 2011).

Having demonstrated in this section that Fazul played a critical role in mapping the Kenyan territory for terrorism, the following section documents cases of terrorism and the underlying reasons for its escalation.

### **6.1.2. The Escalation of Terrorism**

Following the 1998 Nairobi terror attacks, there was apprehension amongst Kenyans that the country had been thrust into the theatre of terrorism. An opinion poll conducted by the Nation Media Group soon after the Nairobi and Dar es Salaam terror attacks found that "most people in Kenya and Tanzania believe that the targeting of their countries by anti-American extremists and the reprisal missile attacks make further attacks more, rather than less

likely.”<sup>179</sup> 73% of the Kenyans interviewed said that they felt less safe than before, compared to 16% who believed the bombing had not affected their security. Another 48% believed that it would lead to increased terrorism in the world while another 11% believed terrorism in Kenya particularly will increase compared to 17% who thought it would decrease.

The fears expressed in this survey of 1998 have indeed come to pass judging by fieldwork results elicited by the present research. Except in a very small minority, a majority of the respondents in my focus groups had not heard of any acts of terrorism in Kenya prior to the U.S. embassy bombing. The only terrorist incident this minority remembered was the 1980 Norfolk Hotel bombing in Nairobi, the rest mentioned incidences in Palestine, Beirut, Cairo, Lebanon and Israel, confirming that terrorism was not within the realm of Kenyan reality. Asked whether they were aware of incidences of terrorism post-1998, a majority answered in the affirmative. This could mean either or both of the following factors; one, there has been increased reportage of terrorism-related issues in the local media, thus creating more awareness, or the actual acts of terror have increased. Both factors have contributed to this state of affairs in Kenya. This position is buttressed by Owala *et al* (2013:1) who agree that many developing countries, such as Kenya, have not in the past had many acts of terrorism originating from the country itself, and have for a long time reported on terrorist acts in other countries. In view of the increased reportage of cases of terrorism in the Kenyan media, one question that arises is whether cases of terrorism in the earlier decades prior to 1998 could have occurred but been reported as inter-faith conflict, criminal murders, or cross-border abductions? An examination of newspaper reports of the early to mid-1990s does not support such a supposition. While criminal cases were indeed reported as such, cases of interfaith conflicts pitting Islam against Christianity, and vice versa, did not make it to the newspaper pages suggesting that they probably never existed. Cross-border conflicts along the Kenya-Somali border existed but these were motivated by inter-clan conflicts, mainly over access and control of natural resources such as pastures and water. What has changed since 1998 to qualify these cases as acts of terror is that the reported cases, as documented in table 6.1 below, are the fact that they are motivated by external, international networks that claim affiliation to known terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda and Al Shabaab. Based on the available evidence, it is arguable that the label ‘terrorism’ became commonplace in the local media after 1998. This view resonates with Owala *et al*'s (ibid) observation that in the recent

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<sup>179</sup> *East African*, 31<sup>st</sup> August to 6<sup>th</sup> September, 1998.



past there have been increased cases of terrorist activities in the developing world, such as in Kenya and Nigeria, hence the increased media presence of these cases. Terrorism incidents post-1998 enumerated by our respondents mirror what was also reported in the media supporting the observation that there has been an escalation of terrorist. Below is a summary of the incidences reported in three of Kenya's leading newspapers, *Daily Nation*, *East African Standard* and *The Star*, between 1998 and 2012.

Table.6.1: Incidences of Terrorism reported in the Kenya print media between 1998 and 2012.<sup>180</sup>

<b>Year</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Incident</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Fatalities</b>	<b>Injured</b>	<b>Perpetrator</b>
1998	7.08	Bombing	American Embassy.	254	Over 5000	Al Qaeda
2002	28.11	Bomb attack	Israeli tourists at an Israeli-owned Hotel, Mombasa.	15	80	Al Qaeda
2002	28.11	Missile attack	Israeli- destined flight from Mombasa.	0	-	Al Qaeda
2002	18.12	Bombing	Discotheque.	3	Not reported (NR).	Unknown
2003	13.08	Grenade detonation	Terror suspect kills self and police officer.	2		Al Qaeda
2007	11.06	Explosives	Restaurant in downtown, Nairobi.	2	NR	Al Shabaab
2007	11.06	Grenade attack	Bus park, in Nairobi.	3	39	Al Shabaab
2010	04.12	Grenade attacks	Policemen.	3	-	Al Shabaab
2010	18.12	Grenade attacks	Travellers at Kampala Coach's stage.	1	26	
2011	01.10	Kidnapping	Marie Dedieu, a 66-year old disabled French woman from her Manda home.	Later died	-	Al Shabaab
2011	13.10	Kidnapping	Two female Spanish 'Medicins sans Frontieres' aid workers.		-	Al Shabaab
2011	24.10	Grenade attacks	Mwaura's Pub <sup>181</sup> and Bus park in downtown Nairobi.	5	NR	Al Shabaab
2011	27.10	Grenade attack	A vehicle carrying KCSE exams in Mandera.	4	NR	Al Shabaab
2011	05.11	Grenade	Worshippers, Garissa	2	Scores	Muslim

<sup>180</sup> The list is by no way exhaustive.

<sup>181</sup> Considered the first terror attack after Kenya's Defense Forces' (KDF) incursion in Somalia.

		attack	Pentecostal Church.			Youth Centre (MYC) <sup>182</sup>
2011	24.11	Blasts Grenade attack	Public, Garissa Military staff of the KDF.	3 1	NR	Al Shabaab
2011	05.12	Grenade explosion	Policemen at the Ifo refugee camp, Garissa.	1	3	MYC
2012	01.01	Grenade attacks and shooting	Revellers at a discotheque, Garissa.	6	100s	MYC
2012	11.01	Bombing	Administration Police camp in Gerille, Wajir.	7	-	Suspected Al Shabaab
2012	10.03	Series of explosions	Travellers at Machakos Bus Station, Nairobi.	6	63	Al Shabaab
2012	31.03	Grenade attack Bombing (home-made)	Prayer rally, Mtwapa Restaurant (All in Mombasa).	1	NR	Muslim youth
2012	29.04	Grenade attack	Worshippers at a church in Ngara.	1	10	MYC
2012	15.05	Grenade attack Explosive	Discotheque in Mombasa. Police vehicle in Garissa.	1 1	5 4	Al Shabaab MYC
2012	28.05	Explosive	Assanands Music House, Nairobi.	1	36	Al Shabaab
2012	24.06	Explosives	Jericho Beer Garden, Mombasa.	4	30	
2012	01.07	Twin grenades and small arms attacks	Worshippers at Our Lady of Consolata Catholic church and African Inland Church in Garissa.	17	66	MYC
2012	03.08	Suicide attack	Eastleigh Estate.	1	6	Al Shabaab
2012	28.08	Grenade attacks	Police after Sheikh Rogo's execution.	3	100s	MYC
2012	15.09	Landmine	Police in Garissa.	2	-	Unknown
2012	30.09	Grenade attack Shooting	Sunday school at St. Polycarps Church, Nairobi. Police on patrol in Garissa.	1 2	NR -	Suspected Al Shabaab terrorists
2012	27.10	Shooting	Police officer in Daadab refugee camp, Garissa.	1	-	Unknown
2012	18.11	Explosives	Matatu <sup>183</sup> in Eastleigh,	10	25	MYC

<sup>182</sup> A radical Islamist youth movement founded in 2008 in Majengo area of Nairobi as an advocacy group claiming to articulate social, economic and religious issues of impoverished and disadvantaged young Muslims in Kenya. It has, however, transformed into an Islamic radicalism hub for the preaching of jihadist ideologies and recruitment of local youth to the Al Shabaab. It has expanded to Mombasa, Garissa and Somalia and is accused of encouraging violent action inside Kenya, one of its primary goals. It carries out some of its terror attacks in cooperation with Al Shabaab (Anzalone 2012).

			Nairobi.			
2012	05.12	Roadside bomb	Joska area, Eastleigh, Nairobi during rush hour.	1	6	Suspected MYC
2012	07.12	Explosives	Mosque in Eastleigh, Nairobi.	7	8	Al Shabaab
2012	19.12	Explosives	Public outside Al Amin Mosque, Eastleigh during rush hour.	2	10s	Suspected MYC
2012	20.12	Shootings	Public in Garissa.	3	-	Al Shabaab

Besides these widely reported incidents, Kenyan authorities together with her Western counterparts reported foiling numerous terrorist attacks against Western interests in Kenya, reinforcing the fear that the country will continue facing such threats. One such was the foiled attempt by Fazul to blow up the newly opened U.S. Embassy in Nairobi using a light aircraft in 2003 (Mogire & Agade, 2011; West, 2006). The West's warnings of imminent terrorist attacks, temporary closure of their embassies<sup>184</sup> and suspension of flights<sup>185</sup> to and from their countries confirms this claim. An analysis of these incidents, while revealing an accelerating trend, also identified two notable periods in which they occurred, suggesting that they were triggered by particular events.

The first period is between 1998 and 2004 when the first major incident of terror attack, the 1998 bombing of the U.S. Nairobi Embassy occurs with subsequent events related to it. The personal involvement of Fazul in these incidents is notable: the targets, the Paradise Hotel in Kikambala, the Israeli-destined Arkia airliner and the new U.S. Embassy. Although the last two were not successfully executed, these targets could suggest that Al Qaeda considered it still had unfinished business against the U.S. and its allied state of Israel (Otenyo, 2004). Arguing on the premise that these latter incidences were a continuation of the 1998 Nairobi terror attack, one could say they have been motivated by the same objectives, namely: "the desire to drive the United States from all Muslim lands, especially in the Arabian peninsula" (Bergen et al, 1998:19). The selected targets – had the foiled attacks succeeded – would have had significant impact on U.S. and Israeli interests in the region raising Al Qaeda's profile as a terrorist group. America's support for Israel is a cause that has been frequently adduced for anti-American feelings in many parts of the Muslim world (Kegley Jr, 2003; Mogire &

<sup>183</sup> Public service vehicle.

<sup>184</sup> The new U.S. embassy was closed between 22<sup>nd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> June 2003.

<sup>185</sup> British Airways and Israel's El Al suspended flights into Kenya in May 2003.

Agade, 2011); as Otenyo suggests (cited in Mogire & Agade, 2011), the very fact of Kenya's friendship with the U.S. and Israel renders it a terrorist target.

The second wave of terror attacks began in 2007 but there is very little reportage of incidents between 2008 and 2010. Then this increased significantly towards the end of 2011 and reached its peak in 2012. These attacks were characterised by the selection of soft targets such as bus termini, pubs and market places, places that are not normally associated with stringent security surveillance. The weapons of choice were the un-sophisticated Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) with grenades being the weapon of choice. The intention, it appears, is not geared at inflicting mass casualties but to undermine government efforts at securing her citizens and the disruption of economic activity (Kegley Jr, 2003). The ousting of the Islamic Court Union government in Somalia by the U.S. and African-union backed invasion by Ethiopian forces in 2007 marked the beginning of a new wave of terrorism in Kenya. In the aftermath of this invasion, Kenyan and U.S. forces set up joint positions along the Kenya-Somalia border to capture militants fleeing Somalia. Kenyan officials are reportedly said to have detained over 100 refugees before extraditing them to Ethiopia, to the great chagrin of Somali Islamists (Fisher 2013; Prestholdt 2011). The ousting of ICU and the inability of TFG to govern effectively the whole of Somalia created a vacuum that was easily filled by militant organizations such as Al Shabaab. Kenya's support for TFG in its struggle against the ICU has been counter-productive. Al Shabaab vowed retaliation and threatened to carry out terror attacks in Kenya for its partisan role in Somalia. The recruitment of local youth to join Al Shabaab notably went a notch higher from 2007 lending credence to Al Shabaab's claims of responsibility for the terror attacks in Kenya (Anzalone, 2012).

Towards the end of 2011, Al Shabaab started cross-border forays into Kenya to kidnap Western tourists, especially in northern Kenya and on the Indian Ocean islands. One notable incident is the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2011 kidnapping of Marie Dedieu<sup>186</sup> from her Kenyan resort in Manda to Somalia, where she died a few weeks later in the hands of her captors (Nzes, 2012). Kenya, incensed by the damage these attacks were inflicting on her tourism industry, and the perceived lukewarm<sup>187</sup> support for the war on terror, was spurred to intervene in October

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<sup>186</sup> A disabled French woman who had lived in Manda for many years.

<sup>187</sup> The failure by the Kenyan government to pass the 'Suppression of Terrorism' bill attracted criticism from the U.S. government and other Western allies who threatened to discontinue military aid if Kenya showed no commitment on the war on terror (Fisher 2013).

2011 by sending her military troops to pursue the enemy, Al Shabaab, in their own country in an operation codenamed “*Linda Nchi*.”<sup>188</sup> This prompted Al Shabaab to warn that it would launch a campaign of terror in Kenya; and true to her word, there have been 29 attacks involving grenades or improvised devices, which have left 99 people dead and over 300 others injured since Kenya’s incursion into Somalia in 2011. A sample of the attacks experienced during this period is as tabulated in table 6.1. In these waves of attack, churches henceforth become part of the terrorists’ agenda. According to Yakub Dahiye,<sup>189</sup> the Muslim Youth Centre (MYC)<sup>190</sup> justifies these attacks on the basis that “Kenya is a Christian nation that discriminates against the Muslims hence the need to take the war to adherents of the Christian faith.” The entry of the MYC introduces a new perspective to terrorism in Kenya: the Muslim-Christian conflict.<sup>191</sup>

This section has demonstrated the acceleration of terrorism in Kenya after the 1998 Nairobi terror attack. The discussion has been premised on the existence of two different waves of terror attacks in Kenya between 1998 and 2012. It suggests that that these waves were triggered by, first, the anti-American ideology espoused by Osama bin Laden’s Al Qaeda and its followers; and secondly, Kenya’s support of the ousting of the Islamic Court Union in Somalia and the subsequent rendition of the fleeing Islamists to Ethiopia and Kenya’s own defence forces invasion of Somalia in 2011. Many in Kenya have therefore attributed the recent escalation of terror attacks to its military’s invasion of Somalia (Fisher, 2011; Nzes, 2012).

Having demonstrated that terrorism activities are indeed on the rise in Kenya, this study sought to establish from its informants the other factors that are contributing to this situation. While it is not possible to discuss all the factors they identified, I will in this section consolidate them into three major categories: marginalisation; Islamic madrassa; and counterterrorism.

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<sup>188</sup> Swahili for ‘protect the nation’.

<sup>189</sup> Personal interview, Nairobi (13.12.2012). Yakub frequently prays at Riyadha Mosque in Pumwani where MYC is based.

<sup>190</sup> See note 182.

<sup>191</sup> See 6.2.2 for a brief discussion on interfaith conflict.

### 6.1.3. Marginalisation

The former North Eastern Province, a region mainly occupied by ethnic Somalis, is by common consent the most disadvantaged region in Kenya. Since independence it has experienced a history of insurgency, misrule, repression, chronic poverty, massive youth unemployment, insecurity, poor infrastructure and lack of basic services - all combining to produce some of the country's bleakest socio-economic and political conditions (Crisis Group, 2012). This marginalization started way before independence when the region was declared the North Frontier District (NFD) and closed to development because it was of marginal economic interest to the British colonists. The formation of the Somali Republic in 1960 saw a majority of Kenyan Somalis in the NFD agitate for secession to become part of Somalia, an agitation that was turned down by the Britain-sponsored Regional Boundaries Commission of 1962. They did not see their community having "a stake in a newly independent, multicultural and 'Christian' Kenya" (ibid: 2). The forced incorporation into Kenya was thus seen as a betrayal of their aspirations as a people hence engendering an armed rebellion – the Shifta war<sup>192</sup> of the 1960s. The government sent in its security forces to suppress the rebellion and declared a state of emergency in the province that was to last for almost 30 years, a period that witnessed grave brutalities against the Somali people. They perceived these brutalities as a wholesale condemnation of a people for espousing a Somali identity. The breakdown in Somalia in 1991, coupled with its long and porous border with Kenya, heralded a new era of insecurity and inter-clan conflict due to the increased availability of guns, and an influx of Somali refugees - some of whom fought on the side of their Kenyan clans. The government continued sending security forces to mop up the illegal arms and to flush out non-Kenyan Somali for confinement to refugee camps. Believing that the refugees were hiding amongst the citizens, the operations violated the rights of Kenyans of Somali origins too, alienating them further from their government. Screening missions to the North Eastern Province were also launched by the government to identify the refugees but these also promoted the perception that the Kenyan Somali were being discriminated against. They perceived as discrimination the rigorous and often arbitrary screening requiring them to show evidence of citizenship on the pretext of preventing Somali Somalis from infiltrating the country (Mwangi, 2012). While the latter may seem a justifiable precautionary measure

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<sup>192</sup> A rebellion by Somali-speaking people of North Eastern Province advocating for secession to become part of the Somalia Republic.

on the side of government, other border communities, like the Abakuria, Teso and Maasai are not subjected to similar scrutiny.

Anyone travelling along Kenya's coastal strip, from Shimoni to Siyu and Taveta to Bura will notice the endemic poverty and chronic underdevelopment pointing at the state of marginalization of the region. From the dilapidated state of roads to school buildings in poor shape, lack of water, poorly distributed health facilities and neglected farms to dilapidated housing structures; all attest to government neglect of the region. Coastal residents assert that successive regimes from 1963 have marginalized them by failing to develop or facilitate the local Muslim people to invest in their own area. Instead, 'upcountry' people have been supported in investing in the tourism sector through government loans and grants to build hotels, restaurants and other tourism facilities because of their close association with those in power (Vittori *et al*, 2009). Jobs in these sectors, they alleged, are equally dished out to 'upcountry' people, especially in the professional cadres; anyone with a Muslim name is hardly considered for employment. Owing to this government neglect, Muslim non-governmental organizations such as Al Haramain Islamic Foundation, Ibrahim Bin Abdul Aziz Foundation, the World Assembly of Muslim Youth, Help Africa People, African Relief Agency and the Islamic Charitable Foundation, and so on (Kagwanja, 2010), have conveniently filled the gap left by government. Consequently, they have carved a niche for themselves by working with and developing the coastal region and other Muslim dominated regions of northern Kenya. However, in the aftermath of the 1998 terror attack, many of these non-governmental organizations were deregistered and accused of having linkages with terror groups. Many civic leaders in Muslim communities contend that the crackdown on larger welfare-oriented Muslim NGO's had impacted on community-led initiatives such as the running of orphanages, schools and health centres in the former Coast Province and North Eastern Province, increasing poverty in Islamic communities (Lind & Howell, 2009: 343-344). Hence, eliciting resistance as this was seen as an attempt by the government to continue their marginalization. Rather than addressing the causes of marginalization, the government assumed that banning these organizations would diminish the danger of the local youth being attracted to the radical Islamist ideas advocated by international terrorist networks.

#### 6.1.4. Islamic Madrassa

Madrassa have become the new grounds for the recruitment of terrorists (Haynes, 2006: 500). Although these schools are intended to spread literacy among the under-privileged youth through the study of the Koran by focusing on its *tafsiri*, *sharia*, *hadith*, *mantiq* and *historia* (interpretation, law, recorded sayings and deeds of the Prophet, logic and Islamic history), some are being used as indoctrination centres advocating extremism against non-believers. Al Haramaiin Islamic Foundation, which supported madrassa schools along the coast in the mid-2000s, is thought to have promoted Salafist<sup>193</sup> teachings in these schools, thus the emergence of Islamic extremism, especially amongst the youth. Critics allege that madrassa propagate anti-Western propaganda in the context of references to extra-national conflict, such as the American-led campaigns and meddling against Gadaffi in Libya, Sudan, Somalia and the enduring Palestinian-Israeli conflict. This portrayal enables them to build an image of a tormented Islam under attack from the West. They also cite the intrusion of Western cultural values and behaviour patterns as evidence that their faith is being denigrated. Sheikh Mohammed Idriss<sup>194</sup> has observed that madrassa have now become more conservative in the interpretation of the Koran and fears that their narrow interpretation could be exploited by extremist groups to recruit the youth to support terrorism. He adds that his organization “is opposed to teachings that introduce unsuitable ideologies to youth, adding that those behind the violence were using youth for their selfish interests and agenda” (*The Standard*, 2013).

In reaction to these fears, the government instituted an investigation into the madrassa Islamic schools suspected to be propagating extremism and deported foreign clerics suspected of preaching it; and tried controlling madrassa by asking their heads to provide details of their students, location and their source of funding. This was interpreted as a government strategy to control Muslims and the growth of Islam (Amnesty International, 2005) and was, therefore, resisted for it was viewed as a further scheme to discriminate against them. Commenting on the heightening trend of radicalisation of the Kenyan Muslims, particularly

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<sup>193</sup> A strand of Islam that works towards returning the entire Muslim community to an ideal world lived strictly according to the teachings of the Koran and as lived by the Prophet under the guidance of Allah’s law. They considered the local forms of Islam ‘primitive’ and in need of ‘purification’ to return the Muslim community to the ways of Allah (Haynes 2006: 491). It also strives to revive Islamic thought within the boundaries of Islamic principles – where Islamic solutions are sought for contemporary problems (Gunaratna 2002).

<sup>194</sup> Chairman of the Council of Islamic Preachers of Kenya (CIPK).



in the north-eastern region of Kenya, Mr E. Hogendoorn<sup>195</sup> stated that “one long-term factor is that for the last couple of decades, there has been an increased funding of conservative madrassa that have made the Muslim community much more conservative and isolated from central government.”<sup>196</sup>

#### **6.1.5. Counter-terrorism: A plot against Islam?**

While the 1998 Nairobi terror attack on the U.S. Embassy was registered in the U.S. terrorism radar alert, it was not considered serious enough a threat to warrant a U.S. policy shift towards East Africa. However, the September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 attacks and the subsequent terrorist activities in Kenya in 2002 reinforced concerns that East Africa could become more attractive to Al Qaeda terrorists, prompting George Bush’s foreign policy shift to include eastern Africa (Vittori *et al*, 2009). The desire to vanquish existing Al Qaeda terrorists from the region and to deter their further expansion culminated in the formulation of the East Africa Counter-terrorism Initiative (EACTI) in 2003. It was intended to provide training and equipment for counter-terrorism units, as well as support for legislators and other senior-level decision makers involved in policy formulation to counter terrorism. Kenya, which had become a haunt for terrorism in the region, supported the initiative. Its implementation took various forms, that have instead of deterring a further spread of Islamic fundamentalism and its associated terror, ended up eliciting resentment from Muslim communities who see these measures as proof of the prejudice against their faith (Mogire & Agade, 2009; Morgan, 2009). Members of the Muslim communities interviewed for this study had the following grievances against these initiatives, which I now discuss.

This study was informed that since Fazul’s hideouts in Siyu, Malindi and Mombasa were uncovered, there have been indiscriminate raids on madrassas, internet cafes, fisheries, non-governmental organization’s offices and even homes over suspicion that they harboured terrorists. An internet café operator in Mombasa’s Saba Saba area, Mr Salim Ahmed, for instance, narrated how in 2008 his café was raided by the Anti-Terror Police Unit<sup>197</sup> (ATPU),

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<sup>195</sup> Project director, Crisis Group Horn of Africa

<sup>196</sup> [www.crisisgroup.org/en/multimedia/podcast/2012/kenya-hogendoorn-kenya-somalia-islamist-radicalisation.aspx](http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/multimedia/podcast/2012/kenya-hogendoorn-kenya-somalia-islamist-radicalisation.aspx)

<sup>197</sup> A special unit of the police set up in February 2003 to plan and execute anti-terrorism operations in Kenya. It receives security assistance particularly training and equipment from the United States and United Kingdom.

five times in a period of two weeks, over suspicion that Fazul had been frequenting the place. He was thus suspected of either being sympathetic to or engaged in activities that supported terrorism, without any shred of evidence. His six desktop computers were seized and taken away by ATPU purportedly to search any information linking him to terrorism. His home was not spared either as they suspected he could have hidden more computer devices there. Raiding his house, he said, violated his privacy as the house was completely turned ‘inside-out’ including inspecting personal property belonging to his wife, a great violation of his privacy. They threatened to kill him if he did not give passwords to files and storage disks used by Fazul and his group. Failing to find anything incriminating in his café and house was not enough; he was arrested and interrogated at Kilidini Police station for three days and later released. According to him, the interrogating officers tortured him in an effort to extract information – which he did not have – linking him to terrorists. All this time, he was kept incommunicado without his family being informed or being allowed to access the services of a lawyer. Some of his computers were never returned and his complaints to the police have not yielded any positive results to date. He harbours bitterness against the government for the indiscriminate treatment meted out to him simply for being Muslim and on the tenuous suspicion that he was sympathetic to terrorism.

The story of Ahmed mirrors the experience of many other Muslims in Mombasa, Lamu, Nairobi or Garissa. There are many who own fishing businesses, taxi operations, hotel business – and even hawkers – who have faced similar treatment reinforcing the view that Muslims are being discriminated against in Kenya. This position is supported by Amnesty International (2003) who accuses ATPU and America’s Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) of engaging in arbitrary arrests, torture of suspects, detention without charge and rendition of suspects contrary to Kenyan law. In carrying out its mandate, ATPU has indeed committed a wide variety of human rights abuses against Muslims that are in violation of national, regional and international law (Open Society Foundation, 2013).

They also cited the disappearance, killing and rendition of suspects including those of a section of Muslim leaders to stand trial in foreign countries for terrorism charges – as an affront to their faith and rights as Muslims. They claimed to have witnessed increased cases of mysterious disappearances and unlawful killings of terror suspects, especially from April 2012. Among those they said had been killed by ATPU are people like Sheikh Aboud Rogo,

Issa Abdalla, Omar Faraj, Kassim Omolo Otieno and Ibrahim Ramadhan Hamisi, people that were known to them. Those whose whereabouts remain unknown include Badru Mramba, Jacob Musyoka, and Salim Abubakar. This list is in no way conclusive as it only contains names that my Mombasa focus group enumerated. As might be expected, the government denied involvement in these incidents, though the local Muslim community in Mombasa is not convinced. Such treatment is bound to make the Muslim community lose trust in their government and reduces any chances of collaboration in the fight against terrorism.

The Kenyan Muslim community reviles the deportation and rendition of terror suspects. They remember the cases of 13 Kenyans who were rendered to Uganda on suspicion that they participated in the July 2010 bombing of a restaurant in Kampala that killed 76 people watching the World Cup. Alamin Kimathi,<sup>198</sup> who was lured from Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, Nairobi, while en route to Kampala with his lawyer to arrange legal representation for the Kenyan rendered victims, ended up becoming the most visible symbol of the renditions. He was mistreated, tortured and psychologically abused before being charged with terrorist acts. He remained incarcerated for one whole year, to be finally released for lack of evidence (Angira, 2011). As a Kenyan-renowned Muslim rights defender, his story drew condemnation from the Kenyan Muslim fraternity. Upon his release, he stated that “it is sad that Kenyan citizens were being taken to Uganda like bags of charcoal, ...even though the ‘Suppression of Terrorism Bill’ had not been passed in Kenya, it was alive with all its abuses (ibid: 13.09.2011).”

The rendition of Kenyans to Uganda was not the first since the counter-terrorism initiatives began. In 2007, Kenya rendered about 85 people to Somalia, who were subsequently rendered to Ethiopia on the fall of the Islamic Court Union in Somalia following its invasion by the Ethiopian forces<sup>199</sup> (Fisher, 2013; Human Rights Watch, 2008; Open Society Foundation, 2013; Prestholdt, 2011). The rendered suspects on these two incidents were reportedly tortured in violation of their rights. Kenya’s own Minister for Justice and Constitutional Affairs – a Senior Legal Counsel – Mutula Kilonzo stated that the renditions were illegal as they violated the Kenyan constitution. His position was in accordance with an

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<sup>198</sup> Executive Coordinator of Muslim Human Rights Forum.

<sup>199</sup> See pages 204.

earlier ruling by a High Court Judge<sup>200</sup> that the renditions were illegal. (Mogire & Agade, 2009:478).

The rendition, disappearance and killing of people suspected of terrorism, while in contravention of the law, suggests the existence of a deliberate move to erase terror suspects rather than taking them to court for fear that, they will be released for lack of solid evidence<sup>201</sup> as happened to Alamin and Ahmed. It smacks of discrimination to have Muslim' rights trampled upon even after a declaration, by none other than the Justice Minister, that the renditions were illegal. The violation of human rights and the use of extra-judicial measures to address terrorism could be counter-productive as terror groups could use these affronts to recruit and to justify their use of violence.

In Nairobi, the study elicited cases of discrimination facing Kenyan Somalis in search of identification and travel documents such as Identification Cards (ID) and passports. Some, like Aden Farah,<sup>202</sup> an ethnic Kenyan Somali claimed to have gone to the registration office in Pumwani over ten times without success. He said that, unlike other Kenyans, they asked him to produce both of his grandparents' identification cards, a letter from the local administration chief and birth certificate to prove that he was truly Kenyan and not a Somalia Somali. His school leaving certificates were not enough to convince the registration personnel that he was Kenyan. What makes his situation, and that of many other Somalis in similar circumstances, difficult is that they hail from pastoralist communities whose grandparents moved from one place to another in search of pastures and not many were able to, or considered it useful, to obtain identification cards when registration exercises were conducted. Farah knew of other people that had bribed the registration officials to acquire the identification cards. Acquisition of a Kenyan passport is even more difficult, especially for the ethnic Somali. They are subjected to a more stringent procedure that includes proof of Kenyan identity and reasons for applying for the passport.<sup>203</sup> Joseph Tallam,<sup>204</sup> an immigration official in Nairobi, justified the application of these stringent measures on the Somalis by arguing that non-Kenyan Somalis have previously managed to acquire passports

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<sup>200</sup> Ruling rendered on 29<sup>th</sup> September, 2010 by Justice Aggrey Muchelule.

<sup>201</sup> Interview with a Kenyan intelligence police, Mombasa, 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2013.

<sup>202</sup> Personal interview, Nairobi 15<sup>th</sup> October 2013.

<sup>203</sup> It is a constitutional right for any Kenyan to acquire a passport without having to give reasons for it.

<sup>204</sup> Personal interview, Nairobi 15<sup>th</sup> October 2013.

using illegally acquired Kenyan identification. He explained that the fact that there are many more Somalis than any other ethnic groups applying for Kenyan passports raises their suspicion. Corruption has been attributed as one of the factors contributing to increased insecurity and terrorism in Kenya because its perpetrators have been able to secure Kenyan identification documents enabling them to pursue their terror activities without arousing any suspicion (Morgan, 2009; Rosenau, 2005).

The Somali residents of Eastleigh<sup>205</sup> suburb of Nairobi have never forgotten the one-week's raids and rancour visited upon them by the police in mid-January 2010. This followed a January 15<sup>th</sup> demonstration in the city streets by the Muslim fraternity, protesting the detention and subsequent deportation of controversial Jamaican cleric Sheikh Abdullah al-Faisal who the government accused of spreading radicalism. Whereas the protests drew participants from Nairobi's Muslim community in general, the police zeroed down on the Somali population in Eastleigh claiming that the suburb was harbouring terrorists from Somalia and refugees who had escaped from the Daadab refugee camp in North Eastern province. More than 2000 Somalis, including Kenyans who could not produce identification cards were rounded up for screening; those refugees found to be in the city illegally were returned to the camps. The plight of many a Kenyan Somali is captured by the protestation of Izzakabdi Mahfur,<sup>206</sup> a victim of the police swoop.

“I am a Kenyan but that did not matter because I am Somali; they said I was an Al Shabaab sympathiser engaged in criminal activities by harbouring those fighting the Somali-government! We are feeling harassed for being Somali.”

This was just one in a series of regular police operations and harassment carried out in Eastleigh. They also complained that their businesses are the subject of regular extortion by the police in the belief that they were selling contraband goods smuggled from Somalia.

It is such forms of discrimination against Kenyan Somalis in the issuing of identification and travel documents, the unwarranted police raids on Muslims neighbourhoods and harassment

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<sup>205</sup> Eastleigh is often referred to as ‘Little Mogadishu’ for the large concentration of Somalis in the area. Many Somalia Somalis take refuge here, it is also known for the large presence of Somali-religious clerics (Anzalone 2012).

<sup>206</sup> Personal interview, Nairobi. 15<sup>th</sup> October, 2013. The name has, however, been changed to protect his identity.

that have been seized by Islamists and used as a justification to recruit them to Al Shabaab. In mosques such as Abu-Bakr al Siddique, Al-Hidaya and Masjid-al Amar in Eastleigh, Nairobi, discrimination has been used as a justification to show that it is for being Muslim that they are mistreated - hence the need to rise-up and join forces fighting for Islam (Anzalone 2012). These incidents suggest that being Somali and Muslim is an identity that is increasingly being associated with terrorism justifying the kind of treatment meted out by the authorities to the ethnic Kenyan Somali. Many in this community narrate at least one incident that has happened to them where he or she has been stopped or singled out from a bus by security forces and asked to prove their Kenyan identity.

Alienating Kenyan Muslims further is the recent enactment of the ‘Prevention of Terrorism Act, 2012’, meant to strengthen counter-terrorism measures in Kenya. While the Act contains significant improvements from the clauses contained in the previous contentious ‘Suppression of Terrorism Bill, 2003,’<sup>207</sup> there still exists a perception that it is targeted at the Muslims. They are not convinced that a new anti-terror law is all that was needed since security forces have continued to commit acts against their community in contravention of the law. Salim Ahmed, for instance, pondering aloud, wondered: ‘If the police raided my cyber café and home without a search warrant, arrested and subjected me to torture in contravention of the existing law, what difference will a new anti-terror law make?’ The 2012 killing of Sheikh Rogo and Hashim Khan,<sup>208</sup> and the mysterious disappearance of people in Mombasa in the same year, added to their doubts of the new legislation.

These fears appear not to be baseless as the Act has continued to receive criticism from human rights activists and Muslim leaders. Hassan Omar Hassan, a human rights advocate, states that the Act legitimizes arbitrary seizure of property, entry into a suspect’s property,

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<sup>207</sup> Under pressure from the U.S. government to formulate an anti-terror law, the Kenyan government acquiesced and drafted a raft of measures for presentation to Parliament under the ‘Suppression of Terrorism Bill, 2003. This bill, however, received massive opposition from Muslims, human rights groups and even politicians prompting its review. Its critics asserted that the bill, if passed into law, would have wholesomely taken away the fundamental rights of Kenyans without dealing with terrorism. They particularly singled out clauses which: contravened the constitution; advocated indefinite detention and denial of rights to legal representation during interrogation; holding suspects incommunicado; empowering the cabinet minister responsible for the security docket to declare a person or organization terrorist ; curtailment of freedom of association; and allowing police to use force to arrest terrorists (ICG 2012; K-HURINET 2003).

<sup>208</sup> A Mombasa Muslim preacher who was allegedly pulled out of a bus he was traveling in by people identifying themselves as police, just for his body to be found a few days later at the Tsavo National Park in April 2012.

and listening to private phone conversations without a police warrant (Odula, 2012). For his part, Mr Abdikadir Mohamed,<sup>209</sup> chairman of the Parliamentary Constitutional Implementation Committee (CIC) – himself a Muslim and lawyer – criticises the immense power the Act grants to the Inspector General of Police. The Act accords the Inspector General of Police the power “to arrest if he or she has reasonable grounds to believe that an entity has committed or is planning to commit a terrorist act, attempted to commit or participated in or facilitated the commission of a terrorism act” (Republic of Kenya, 2012:1671). According to this clause, therefore, it seems the government is not obligated to ‘prove beyond any reasonable doubt’ that someone has committed a prohibited activity. The Open Society Foundation (2013: 64) further assert that a general lack of due process pervades the Act and qualifies this observation by referring to the constitutional provision that requires the police to produce a suspect in court within 24 hours, whereupon the detainee is put under the jurisdiction of the court. This Act, however, allows the police to apply to the court for a continued detention of a suspect up to a period of 30 days as investigations are carried out and this could be extend up to 90 days if a further application is made by the police. Following the September 21<sup>st</sup> 2013 terror attack on Westgate Shopping Mall in Nairobi, emerging evidence suggests that the government’s responses did not accord with the provisions of the law. Though the Muslim community is on record condemning the massacre of innocent civilians,<sup>210</sup> this did not spare the arrest and interrogation of over 40 Muslims in connection with the act (Open Society Foundation, 2013; Kegoro, 2013). Does the implementation of aspects contained in this Act portend an increase in community tension and the risk of encouraging ‘home grown’ terrorists?

The period towards the end of 2013 and the beginning of 2014 witnessed increased cases of violent activities targeted at Muslim youth in Mombasa with the justification that these activities were intended to flush out terrorists operating within the precincts of Masjid Musa Mosque. It is too early at this stage, just after the event, to provide an objective analysis of the situation but this will be dealt with in the next chapter. This part discussed the underlying factors that contributed to the escalation of terrorism in Kenya, the following part

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<sup>209</sup> *East African*, 30<sup>th</sup> September – 6<sup>th</sup> October, 2012.

<sup>210</sup> Adan Wachu, Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM) issued a statement condemning this act of terrorism *Daily Nation*, September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2013).

demonstrates that radicalisation of the Muslim youth and interfaith tensions are among the impacts occasioned by this escalation.

## **Part II: Radicalisation and the Appropriation of Islamic Identity**

This Part discusses the appropriation of Islamic identity by terrorists and extremist Islamic clerics to radicalise the youth in the country, positing that this radicalisation threatens to ignite interfaith conflict between Christians and Muslims. The activities of one Muslim cleric, Sheikh Aboud Rogo, will be used as a case study to demonstrate this claim; but I first present a contextual overview of radicalisation in Kenya.

### **6.2.1. Radicalisation: Sheikh Aboud Rogo, the Case of a Muslim Cleric**

While Kenyan Muslims, just like Muslims in other parts of the world, have been exposed to various strands of radical Islam in the last four decades, it is not until the 1990s that there emerges a new generation of Salafi jihadist militant groups espousing “a distinct puritanical theology and a potent political narrative” (Crisis Group, 2012:6) in Kenya. Bin Laden, its chief proponent, advocated a total devotion to Islam, promoted the cult of martyrdom and justification of terrorism. Its spread to Kenya, I must clarify, was through the arrival of a devout group of Al Qaeda-trained Muslims inspired by Islamic scholars who were willing to sacrifice their lives in the name of Allah. They embarked on mapping out areas for possible attack in Kenya. The success of the mission is manifest in the bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi that resulted in massive casualties and destruction of property.

Bin Laden’s selection of Kenya, it is arguable, was informed by his knowledge of the perceived marginalization of Muslims in Kenya, which he hoped to manipulate and deploy for his anti-American and jihadist pursuits. Gunaratna (2002) suggests that Al Qaeda’s success in her recruitment drives is attributed to her deployment of propaganda particularly calling on Muslim youth to reflect on their state in society while reiterating the beneficial rewards in dying fighting for Islam. One of my discussion groups in Mombasa opined that the violence that rocked the coastal towns of Kenya, such as Mombasa, Lamu, Malindi and Voi in 1992, following the banning of the Islamic Party of Kenya (IPK), could have convinced



Bin Laden that Kenya had the right mix of ingredients to support terrorism: a large and marginalized Muslim community.

The claim by Osama bin Laden in a CNN interview in 1997, that he is most outraged by “the presence of U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia, the land of Mecca and Medina, the holiest place of the Muslims” (Bergen & Smyth, 1998:17) prompting him to declare jihad on the United States of America, provides this study with the first hint that the 1998 terror attack on the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi was couched on Al Qaeda’s Islamic anti-American sentiments. Additionally, at an earlier date in February 1997 as the U.S. attack on Iraq was imminent, Bin Laden joined other leading Islamic radicals to call on Muslims “to kill the Americans and their allies – civilian or military” (ibid) wherever they were found. This framing was further buttressed by the Islamic Liberation Army of the People of Kenya (ILAPK), who in claiming responsibility for the Nairobi attack, cited the same objectives that motivates Bin Laden’s jihadist ideology.

“I did it for the cause of Islam,” and of Bin Laden, “He is my leader, and I obey his orders” were the words of Muhammed Sadiq Howaida<sup>211</sup> in confessing his participation in the planning and execution of the Nairobi embassy bombing. Howaida was sent to Kenya in 1994 by Bin Laden to start planning for the attack. He settled in Witu Lamu, and married a local woman of Arabic origins. To camouflage his intentions and in keeping to the local livelihood sustenance traditions, he set up a fishing business in the town. The story of Howaida mirrors that of Fazul who also settled within Lamu and was integrated in the local community. Using an Islamic identity, Al Qaeda members wove themselves into the fabric of the coastal religious communities to gain an entry and acceptance. Taking advantage of the poverty and state of under-development along the coast, the terrorists, who masqueraded as devout and benevolent Muslims, identified causes to support to endear them to the local community. Fazul, for instance, helped renovate the towns’ Friday mosque and established a football team to keep the local youth engaged.

By virtue of their Islamic identity, they are accepted in the community and are even allowed to marry local women and to establish businesses. Intrigued by how Lamuans could allow

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<sup>211</sup> Howaida was one of the planners of the 1998 terrorist attack on the U.S. Embassy and was arrested on the same day, 7<sup>th</sup> of August, 1998 by Pakistani officials in Karachi while attempting to sneak into Afghanistan.

strangers to live in their midst without ascertaining what their real identity is, Athman Saidi<sup>212</sup> informed this study that as long as one was not a *kafiri*<sup>213</sup> and was capable of paying ‘dowry,’ nothing could deter him from marrying a local woman. He added that other non-Muslim immigrants in places like Witu have not only failed to marry locally without converting to Islam but have also not penetrated businesses associated with the local Muslim community, such as fishing. Identifying with Islam in this region undoubtedly facilitated their terrorist intentions as no one became suspicious of their movements and activities.

Muslim clerics have joined the bandwagon of those using Islamic identity to radicalize the youth and advance the cause of terrorism in the country. Their fiery sermons against the perceived discrimination of Muslims worldwide - which they then connect to the local issues affecting Muslims – are given religious interpretation to legitimize the call to violence. It is to these clerics and their manipulation of Islamic identity that I now turn.

The story of Sheikh Aboud Rogo whose name was mentioned in several of the places where this research was undertaken, will be used as a case study to demonstrate this point. Siyu’s chief, Ahmed Yunus, knew Sheikh Rogo from his childhood days before the latter relocated to Mombasa. He found him to be well versed in global politics and history, especially Islamic and world history, which he deployed to hit out at Americans for the injustice meted out on Muslims. Mbarak Hashim,<sup>214</sup> a Mombasa resident, corroborates this portrayal of him saying: “Sheikh Rogo was a very eloquent, intelligent and charismatic religious preacher who kept us glued to our mats during his sermons. He certainly had a firm grip on all of us. He interpreted world history and politics interspersing them with verses of the Koran to demonstrate the injustices we were also being subjected by the ‘Christian’ government in Nairobi. Though these sermons painted my reality, I was always afraid that he was being too radical.”

He always argued that the salvation of the Muslim community lay in resisting the invasion of their religion by the West and, therefore, called on the youth to travel to Somalia and join up with their Al Shabaab brethren to root out the infidels. In many of his sermons, he says, Sheikh Rogo minced no words in advocating jihad against infidels and their leaders, top of

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<sup>212</sup> Personal interview, Lamu (23<sup>th</sup> November, 2013)

<sup>213</sup> Swahili reference to a non-believer of any faith.

<sup>214</sup> Name changed for security reasons.

the list being the U.S., the interim Somalia president, Sheikh Shariff Ahmed, top Kenyan politicians and some Kenyan Islamic leaders, all of whom he accused of conspiring to bring down Islam. He presented the war in Somali as the ultimate jihad and exhorted his listeners to martyrdom in support of this war.

Sheikh Rogo's base in Mombasa was the Masjid Musa mosque in Majengo where his radical sermons were very popular among the youth. It is his association with the mosque that gave it the reputation of being Kenya's centre of Islamic radicalisation. In an interview with Ishaq Jumbal,<sup>215</sup> a mosque committee member, I was informed that the mosque was introducing a new policy to ban Tuesday's and Thursday's evening lectures which militant preachers, such as the late Aboud Rogo, had presided over to radicalise the youth through a selective interpretation of Koranic verses.

In Nairobi, Sheikh Rogo was a frequent speaker at events organized by MYC in Pumwani where he served as one of its ideologists (UN Security Council 2011). Ahmad Iman Ali,<sup>216</sup> founded MYC in 2008 as an informal advocacy group for Muslims with the intention of highlighting the social and economic challenges afflicting Muslim youth in the lower levels of society, such as those in Pumwani, who were increasingly getting disillusioned with what they perceived as anti-Muslim discrimination in the country. As MYC's ideologist, he encouraged the youth to remain steadfast in their determination to fight injustices against Muslims all over the world. Aden Farah remembers some of the sermons in which Sheikh Rogo argued that Kenya had become a legitimate field for jihad because of its alliance with the U.S., African Union, Ethiopia and Israel in waging war against the Muslims under the guise of fighting Al Shabaab and 'terrorism'. The latter being a term that had to him become a synonym for 'a war against Islam.' Of the Muslim youth of Pumwani, he equated their suffering to that perpetrated against other Muslims in Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia and urged them to take up arms against those responsible for their poverty.

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<sup>215</sup> Interview, Mombasa, 6<sup>th</sup> October, 2013.

<sup>216</sup> He was Sheikh Rogo's student in Mombasa who spearheaded the recruitment of many Kenyans to join and fight with Al Shabaab in Somalia against Kenya's military invasion. He was declared the *Amiir* (Commander) of Kenyan fighters in Somalia after the death of Fazul. Since 2011, Ahmad Iman Ali has called for jihad in Kenya by instructing Kenyan MYC fighters in Somalia to hit back and cause blasts in Kenya (UN Security Council 2011).



Fig.: 6.1: “Paradise is but a taxi journey away in Nairobi.”<sup>217</sup> Eastleigh, Nairobi, 18<sup>th</sup> November, 2012. Photo: Nation Media Group.

He always referred to Al Shabaab’s grenade attacks in the country as an approach that was available for them to express their displeasure at the Kenyan government; sermons that the youth easily connected with. It is against this premise that I argue that it is the Muslim identity of these disillusioned youth that Sheikh Rogo exploited to advance Al-Shabaab’s jihadist war in Somalia. It may suffice to mention that besides Sheikh Rogo, other radical Islamic clerics have used the Muslim identity to promote terrorist activities in the country.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> August 2012, Sheikh Rogo was killed when his car was shot at while driving to Mombasa along the Malindi – Mombasa Road. His killing sparked one of the worst forms of interfaith violence yet witnessed in Kenya. In Mombasa, Muslim youth immediately went on the rampage, burning down and vandalizing churches in what Awadh Babo, a Standard Newspaper<sup>218</sup> reporter described “an orgy of grenade and gun attacks that lasted for three days,” and whose aftermath was the killing of three police officers and injury of many others (Mwangi, 2012). This spate of riots was condemned by Christians and Muslims alike. Speaking on behalf of Muslim leaders, Sheikh Juma Ngao, chairman of the Kenya National Muslim Advisory Council (KNMAC) stated:

“those who torched churches or killed in the name of Islam were not true Muslims, Islam does not consider Christians as infidels as taught by the late Rogo, Muslims are

<sup>217</sup> A line from the poem “Dreaming of Paradise: My Sheikhs Welcome Me Home,” MYC, October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

<sup>218</sup> *The Standard Newspaper*, 3<sup>rd</sup> September, 2012.

expected by the Koran to protect Christians, Jews and Muslims and their places of worship.”<sup>219</sup>

The attack on churches was intended to trigger an interfaith conflict pitting the Christians against the Muslims. It is to the interfaith conflicts triggered by these attacks that I now turn.

### **6.2.2 Interfaith Conflict**

The appropriation of an Islamic identity to advance the cause of terrorism in Kenya has engendered other consequences that have increasingly become a threat to Kenya’s fragile national unity: an interfaith conflict between the Christians and Muslims. Tension between Islam and Christianity did not start with the torching of churches and attack on Christians after the killing of Sheikh Rogo. It was ignited right from the beginning after it emerged that the 1998 terrorist attack was the work of a group linked to Al Qaeda. This observation was noted by Willy Mutunga,<sup>220</sup> stating that, “there is an on-going political strategy since the bomb tragedy to divide Kenyans and create division by identifying them with their faith. The tragedy should not be used to whip up emotions. Christians must not be confused by propaganda surrounding the August 7<sup>th</sup> events to become religiously intolerant vis-à-vis their Moslem brothers and sisters.”

The new-found unity of purpose between the leaders and the Kenyan people ignited by the bomb blast was now facing new threats from propagandists who were keen to use the tragedy to divide Kenyans and cause disharmony by identifying them with their faiths. Islamic Liberation Army of the People of Kenya (ILAPK), a Muslim group affiliated to Al Qaeda claimed responsibility, hence raising prejudicial reactions against Muslims. In Kenya, for instance, the first of these prejudicial sentiments came from none other than then President, Daniel arap Moi. In addressing mourners after the bombing, he stated that those that masterminded the terror attack ‘could not have been Christians’, a statement that implied that Muslims were responsible for the violence. This statement drew condemnation from its leaders who argued that their religion, just like Christianity, does not support acts of terror or the killing of innocent people for that matter (Bergen & Smyth, 1998; Haynes, 2006).

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<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> A Muslim and Human Rights activist, currently Kenya’s Chief Justice since 2012. *The East African Standard*, 16<sup>th</sup> August, 1998.

The grenade attacks by Al Shabaab on churches and church-related events in Nairobi, Garissa and Mombasa on various dates between 2010 and 2012, and the attacks in Mombasa especially after the execution of Sheikh Rogo as indicated in table 6.1, were meant to ignite interfaith conflict, a bait that has seemingly been taken up by the Christians. The manner in which they were condemned as Islamic acts of terror by many Christian preachers have not helped promote amicable interfaith relations. Such ascriptions have had the negative effect of influencing their faithful to believe that Islam supports terrorism. Muslims, on the other hand, also used these incidents to incite hatred. For instance, after Sheikh Rogo's execution, Al Shabaab called on Kenyan Muslims to protect their religion stating that "Muslims must take the matter into their own hands, stand united against the *kuffar* – non-Muslims and inferentially Christians – and take all necessary measures to protect their religion, their honour, their property and their lives from the enemies of Islam" (Cornway-Smith, 2012). Inherent in this statement is a call to violence to vanquish the *kuffar*. The view that Islam supports terrorism in Kenya is vindicated by findings of a survey conducted by Pew Research Centre in 2010, which found out that 48% of Kenyan Christians view Muslims as supporters of violence while another 30% believe that many, if not most, or all Muslims support Al Qaeda or other violent Islamic groups (Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, 2010). In the focus group discussions I undertook at the Kenyan coast in Mombasa, Kwale and Siyu, nine out of the 36 participants professed the Christian faith. This group believed that at least 25% of Muslims in Kenya supported terrorism. 15 of the Muslims in the group believed that terrorism was not linked to Islam but was instead perpetrated by individuals following terrorist ideologies that were not necessarily supported by Islam. The remaining 12 members preferred not to express their opinions.

That interfaith tension provoked by terrorist acts exists is further supported by the October 2013 call by the Christian clergy in Kenya to have their members at the coast armed, citing worries over attacks on their congregations and churches by Islamist terrorists. This followed the October 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> incidents when two evangelical pastors, Charles Mathole and Ibrahim Kithaka of the Vikwatani Redeemed Gospel Church and East African Pentecostal Church were respectively killed in their churches. Within the same period, the Seventh Day Adventist Church in the Majengo area of Mombasa was torched, a year after a similar fate befell it in the aftermath of Sheikh Aboud Rogo's killing in 2012. While Christian clerics

blamed the attacks on increased radicalization of Muslim youth, the Muslims interviewed for this study blamed it on ‘Nairobi’s war on terror’. It is my view, that the reference to Nairobi in this particular instance has implied connotations of “an up-country Christian-led” and ‘Nairobi-run’ government that is executing a discriminatory campaign against coastal Muslims in the name of ‘war on terror.’ Lending credence to this view is the observation by some Muslim clergy that church leaders have been silent on the treatment of Muslims in the current counter-terror operations which could suggest that they are quietly supporting it. Reverend Wilybard Lagho, Vicar General of the Catholic archdiocese of Mombasa, views the increased attacks on churches as raising further the interfaith suspicion that has existed since the war on terror began and which rose sharply after the killing of Sheikh Abould Rogo in 2012 (Lind & Howell, 2010; Nzwili, 2013; Princeton & Stephen, 2004).

The idea of church clergy seeking to keep guns to protect their congregations and themselves against terror attacks by Muslim youth is a matter of grave concern. It is an indictment of the interfaith relations.

#### **Part IV: Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed the escalation of terrorism activities in Kenya post the 1998 Nairobi terror attack focussing on the introduction of Islamic radicalism in Kenya, through the Al Qaeda-linked terrorists and proselytizers advocating a Salafist ideology calling for a return to the puritanical form of Islam as they believe was practised during the days of the Prophet. Espousing these puritanical ideologies and political grievances against the West, especially the U.S., for injustices visited upon Muslims in places like Afghanistan, Palestine and Iraq, won them sympathisers in Kenya. I have discussed the activities of one of these Al Qaeda advocates, Fazul Mohammed, the nexus that masterminded the planning and execution of terrorism activities in the region: from Nairobi to Mombasa and Somalia to Kampala through Al Qaeda and the Al Shabaab terrorist groups. His activities reinforced the fear that East Africa was becoming the hub for terrorism in the Horn of Africa, hence the formulation of strategies, such as the East African Counter-terrorism Initiative, by the U.S. government – supported by Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia to combat terrorism.

The activities incorporated in this initiative, such as coercion of East African nations to formulate anti-terrorism laws, strategies to stabilize Somalia and the formation of the Anti-Terrorism Police Unit (ATPU) in Kenya, while well-intended, were interpreted as targeting the Muslim community. In implementing its mandate, ATPU's activities – raids of terrorist haunts, indiscriminate arrests, torture, renditions, forced disappearances and execution of suspected terrorists - was met with revulsion. Rather than de-escalate the acts of terror, their activities radicalised sections of Islamic youth as they were viewed as discriminatory against their faith. The counter-terrorism initiatives were a threat to Islamic identity as it equated Muslims to terrorists. These initiatives, together with the marginalization of Muslim communities in the coastal and north-eastern regions (as manifest in the broader political and deeper historical contexts concerning the identity, political and economic rights) instigated resentment towards the government (Lind & Howell 2010). This marginalization – real and imagined - has consequently been manipulated by Islamist extremist to enlist the support of the youth to join militant organizations such as Al Shaabab for the advancement of terrorism. The escalation of terrorism in the last few years as indicated in table 6.1., some targeting churches, have raised temperatures regarding the Christian-Muslim relations in Kenya. While there is no likelihood of this escalating to an all-out interfaith violence, there are worries that, if not contained, Al Shabaab might borrow a leaf from Nigeria where the Boko Haram<sup>221</sup> Islamic group has perfected the unleashing of terror attacks, mainly against Christians and resulting in massive casualties on an almost weekly basis (Walker, 2012).

This chapter has demonstrated that post-1998 Islamic identity in Kenya started to be viewed with lenses tinted in terrorism colours. Muslims are generally treated with suspicion wherever they go, especially with the increased incidents of terrorism. Being Somali was also problematized. Subsequently, straightforward things such as the application for identification cards necessitated further proofs of Kenyan identity. This conclusion supports one of the other arguments in this study: that ethnicity threatens Kenya's tenuous nationalism and identity. The unity of purpose exhibited in the aftermath of the 1998 terror attack on the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi was short-lived.

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<sup>221</sup> An Islamist jihadist militant and terrorist organization in north eastern Nigeria that seeks the establishment of a 'pure' Islamic state ruled by Sharia law putting to stop what it deems Westernization (Walker 2013:2 ). Violence linked to Boko Haram has resulted to about 10,000 deaths between 2001 and 2011. Al Shabaab's attacks on churches and public spaces mirrors tactics used by Boko Haram.



## Chapter 7: Conclusion

### 7.1. Summary of Chapters

This dissertation's subject, memorialisation, could have been developed along a number of different lines relating to the August 7<sup>th</sup> 1998, bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi. However, this research project had to stay within the scope of one PhD study, and so for pragmatic reasons, I have selected among topics sub-themes that would enable an understanding of the tragedy, its impacts and the management of the trauma it caused. Consequent to the bombing, media reportage of the rescue efforts manifested the political aspects of ethnicity, which this study has discussed to reveal origins in the colonial period and a subsequent perpetuation in post-independent Kenya during the regimes of Jomo Kenyatta, Daniel arap Moi and Mwai Kibaki, the first, second and third Presidents of the Republic of Kenya. This study has also devoted attention to the escalation of terrorism in Kenya post-1998 and also analyses the appropriation of Islamic identity by radical Islamists belonging to Al Qaeda and Al Shabaab groups as a strategy for rallying support for further terrorist activities in the region. The culmination of which, at the time of writing, was the September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2013 terrorist attack on Westgate Shopping Mall in Nairobi. Increased radicalisation, including attacks on churches, presents a threat, to not only the interfaith relations between Christianity and Islam, but also to the security and stability of Kenya as a whole. Underpinning the present research are concepts such as cultural and trauma memory, history and identity, conflict and reconciliation. I hope this study will stimulate further interest in the subject and enable other researchers to explore those angles that could not be addressed within the scope of this thesis.

This body of work 'Remembering the 1998 Nairobi Terror Attack: Cultural and Trauma Memory and the Reconciliation of a Nation' has examined the material, symbolic and functional elements of the August Seventh Memorial Park in Nairobi as a *lieu de memoire* (Nora 1989). Building on Winter's (1995:56) observation that, "the power to mediate bereavement lies in the strength of 'traditional' forms of social and cultural life as represented in art, poetry and ritual," this study has analysed the monuments and events at the Memorial Park to reveal how families affected by the bombing tragedy have been able to come to terms with their loss. This healing is demonstrated in the manner they engage with the monuments

and the performances enacted there, especially during the annual commemorations and whenever they visit the site and the Documentation Centre. This process was poignantly displayed on 2<sup>nd</sup> May, 2011, following the execution of Osama bin Laden, when a group of survivors trooped to the Memorial Park to ‘celebrate’ his killing and to derive closure to those whose trauma had not healed, as stated by Douglas Sidialo.<sup>222</sup> Their coming together for the annual ritual of commemoration stimulates the community to collectively recall the tragic event and through it enhance group solidarity as well as facilitate the transmission and sustainability of memories (Connerton, 1989: 3; Halbwachs, 1992:38).

Chapter 1 examined the research methodologies deployed in assembling data to test my key argument in the study. These comprised of participant observation, analysis of published and archival material, ethnographic and qualitative interviews and focus group discussions. In the literature review, for instance, comparisons and analyses were drawn between memorialisation processes in Kenya and those in other African countries such as South Africa, and then with similar processes in the rest of the world. The chapter, in keeping with the themes of this body of work, interrogated such broad conceptual and theoretical frameworks as collective memory, history, materiality, ethnicity, nationalism and liminality that underpin key concepts of memory, history and identity, affirming the place of this study within the context of memorialisation.

Chapter 2 discussed the processes leading to the establishment of the August 7th Memorial Park in Nairobi. The chapter opened by describing the event of the bombing of the U.S. Embassy on the 7<sup>th</sup> of August 1998 before proceeding to discuss its implications for culture and trauma memory. The chapter then presented a historical perspective on memorial monuments in Kenya focusing on three specific examples whose histories provide this study with a broad perspective to memorial monuments in Kenya: the Nairobi War Memorial, the Kolowa Massacre Memorial and the Nyeri Memorial, all of which relate to collective memories of the colonial period in Kenya. Describing the processes leading to the establishment of the Memorial Park enabled this chapter to highlight issues germane to the study, such as the entwined relation between memory and history, individual and collective memory, appropriation and re-inscription of monuments and the dichotomy between ethnic and national identity.

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<sup>222</sup> See page 105

Chapter 3, therefore, built on the materials described in Chapter 2 by analysing a series of visual and commemorative rituals associated with the August 7<sup>th</sup> Memorial Park to demonstrate their contribution in providing closure to the trauma experienced by the survivors and the victims' families. Visual and performing art, as discussed in this chapter and Chapter 4, may offer models that individuals or communities experiencing trauma resulting from some of the common tragic events in Kenya, such as road accidents and cattle rustling, could adopt. These have implications for policy on trauma healing and management in Kenya.

The focus of Chapter 4 is on the survivors of the Nairobi terror attack and the coping strategies employed to manage the traumatic memory it instigated. Emphasis in this chapter is placed on letting the survivors narrate their own experiences of the tragedy as this enables the conversion of 'traumatic memory' to 'narrative memory,' a prerequisite for trauma memory healing (Antz & Lambek, 1996: 120). This chapter also articulates the main argument of this study that performance and visual art are critical ingredients to the healing process as demonstrated through the role of music and film.

Given that a tragedy as traumatic as the Nairobi terror attack could instigate projections of ethnicity, as highlighted by media reports of the rescue efforts, Chapter 5 undertook a broader examination of the problem of ethnicity in Kenya. It traced its origins to the colonial period when the British colonists planted seeds of ethnic consciousness through the divide-and-rule tactics they employed to subjugate their subjects, hence raising the consciousness of existing differences among the local communities. It then broached the independence struggle and its presentation as a Kikuyu-only affair, and the impact this framing has continued to have on the construction of nationhood in Kenya. One section examined the development and entrenchment of ethnicity by Kenya's post-independence leaders. The *ethnicisation* of politics, especially with the reintroduction of multi-party democracy in the early 1990's, had a tremendous negative impact on ethnic relations resulting in inter-ethnic conflicts in each presidential election between 1992 and 2007, problematising the quest for nationhood. The violence witnessed in the aftermath of the 2007 elections saw Kenya draw perilously close to disintegration and civil war. This analysis provided a broad context for understanding the role the Documentation Centre plays in peace building, reconciliation and fostering of nationhood

as demonstrated through the activities of its 'Peace Builder's Kids Club' (PBKC) and its other educational outreach programmes in Uasin Gishu County. As regards peace building and conflict reconciliation, it is hoped that this study might offer lessons from PBKC that would be useful in understanding and mediating conflicts.

In Chapter 6, the problem of terrorism in Kenya was considered. This chapter's main argument is that after the 7<sup>th</sup> August 1998 Nairobi terror attack cases of terrorism perpetrated by extremist Islamic organizations escalated. This engendered a perception that Muslims in general support terrorism and hence a suspicious treatment of anyone of Islamic identity in Kenya. It suggested that the continued acts of terrorism and the counter-terrorism measures instituted by the government have not boded well for interfaith relations and are a threat to nationhood in Kenya.

## **7.2. The September 21<sup>st</sup> 2013, terror attack on Westgate Shopping Mall**

In Chapter 6, this study examined incidents of terrorism in Kenya between 1998, when the first major incidence of terrorism, the Nairobi terror attack, occurred, and 2012 when it escalated to unprecedented levels. This, it suggests, could have occurred due to Kenya's military incursion into Somalia in October 2011 to fight the Al Shabaab terror group whose attacks in Kenya had become more frequent and daring. Rather than de-escalate the attacks, the incursion galvanized the Al Shabaab terror group into intensifying grenade attacks, church torching and assassinations, culminating in the September 21<sup>st</sup> 2013, bombing of the Westgate Shopping Mall in Westlands,<sup>223</sup> Nairobi. In its wake was the death of 70 people with another over 200 sustaining injuries, making it the worst case of terror attack since the 1998 bombing of the U.S. embassy in Nairobi. What exactly happened?

At around noon on the 21<sup>st</sup> September, 2013, a group of between 10 and 15 gunmen stormed the Mall and began lobbing grenades and shooting indiscriminately on shoppers, before moving from store to store as they herded shoppers along to act as their human shields. Police

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<sup>223</sup> This is a high-profile shopping mall located in Westlands; an affluent residential suburb frequented by expatriates and wealthy Kenyans and attracts approximately 10,000 persons during weekends (*The Standard* 23<sup>rd</sup> September, 2013).

from Parklands station were the first to arrive at the scene and immediately thereafter, a gun battle ensued inside the Mall. According to Constable Mutua,<sup>224</sup> they reacted to the reported



Fig. 7.1: Fire at the Westgate Shopping Mall on Day 3, (The People Newspaper, 2013).

information believing that this was an ordinary case of armed robbery, as is common in Nairobi. Reinforcements of the General Service Unit's Recce commandoes were, however, soon deployed as it became clearer that the problem was larger than they had anticipated. Gunfire exchanges between the police and the terrorists went on throughout that night. Most of the 'hostages' and survivors were, however, rescued on the second day as military reinforcements were deployed. Explosions and gunfire continued on the second and third days with reports filtering out that some interior floors and the car park had collapsed, but the Kenyan forces were by now fully in control of the building. On the fourth day, President Kenyatta announced the end of the siege and revealed that the security forces had killed five terrorists and apprehended over 15 suspects. By the time the siege ended, Red Cross Kenya announced that 69 people had been reported dead, 49 missing and over 175 others injured (Nation team, 2013; Harel, 2013).

Al Shabaab terror group claimed responsibility for this attack. The Open Society for Justice (2013: 24), quoting Al Jazeera sources, states that its spokesperson, Sheikh Abdulaziz Abu

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<sup>224</sup> Named changed for security reasons; personal communication, Nairobi 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2013.

Muscab, justified the attack on Westgate Shopping Mall on the basis that it "...is a place where tourists from across the world come to shop, where diplomats gather. It is a place where Kenya's decision-makers go to relax and enjoy themselves. Westgate is a place where there are Jewish and American shops. So we have to attack them." "We have warned Kenya but it ignored (us), still forcibly holding our lands...while killing our innocent civilians. If you want peace in Kenya, it will never happen as long as your boys are in our lands," said Sheikh Ali Mohammed Rage, another Al Shabaab spokesman (Nation team, 2013:4). That inflicting death on civilians did not trouble them is found in their justification that the Kenyan Defense Forces had bombed innocent Somali civilians in refugee camps and in Gedo and Jubba regions of Somalia.

I discern two levels of interpretation from this attack; first, the attack on Westgate was aimed at forcing Kenya to rethink its military presence in Somalia; the terrorists had hoped that the massive killing of innocent civilians would make Kenyans pressure the government to withdraw her forces. The killing of civilians further suggests that this act of terrorism was also aimed at attracting the attention of the electronic media and the international press; the victims themselves often mean nothing to the terrorists as was demonstrated in this incident. Anzalone (2013:1) suggests that from Al Shabaab's perspective, the attack on Westgate was a media triumph as it came in the midst of a growing rift among jihadists inside and outside of Somalia regarding consolidation of power by the group's *amir*, Ahmed Godane. The attack also followed a year in which Al Shabaab had lost control of significant swathes of territory in Somalia, particularly the economic centres of Baidoa and Kismaiyu. Attacking Westgate, therefore, returned the beleaguered group to international news headlines catapulting it back into the public limelight. Second, the attack on Westgate Shopping Mall, an Israeli-owned complex, accords with the global Islamist revulsion of anything American and of their Zionist partners. Their perceived injustices against Muslims across the world is the factor justifying attacks, according to Osama bin Laden in his 1998 interview with the CNN (Bergen & Smyth, 1998; Otenyo, 2004). As observed by Kegley Jr. (2003:2), terrorism "had become a sadistic assault on the principles and political culture of the United States and its allies." The fact that major acts of terrorism in Kenya, with the exception of the 1998 Nairobi terror

attack on the U.S Embassy, have been against Israeli-owned interests, is not lost to this research.<sup>225</sup>

In chapter 6, I discussed the emergence of interfaith tensions between Christians and Muslims incited by Islamic fundamentalists through recent terror attacks on churches and Christian crusades.<sup>226</sup> This observation is supported by revelations that Muslims caught up in the Westgate crisis were given preferential treatment by the terrorists. According to reports from the survivors, gunmen asked customers whether they were Muslims and those answering in the affirmative, and could prove so, were allowed to escape. “When I mentioned the first word of the *shahada*,<sup>227</sup> they moved on. That is how I survived.”<sup>228</sup> In the wake of this attack, the Anti-Terror Police Unit is also alleged to have indiscriminately targeted Muslims and arrested 40 of them on suspicion of involvement in the attack (Open Society for Justice, 2013: 20).

In his statement to the nation, the President urged “all Kenyans to stand together and see this dark moment through. Donate blood. Provide information to the authorities. Comfort and reassure the affected families. Let us shame the Devil and his works by demonstrating our timeless values of love, compassion and solidarity” (Kenya News Daily, 2013). In addition, in response to this call, Kenyans in all walks of life united in condemning the terrorists and donated blood to the various hospitals in which survivors were receiving treatment while others served refreshments – tea, water and snacks – to the security contingent on site for the entire four days of siege. In circumstances reminiscent of 1998 when terrorists attacked the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi, Kenya had also just come out of a divisive election and its leaders, especially the opposition, were still smarting from the Supreme Court ruling that declared Uhuru Kenyatta validly elected as President of Kenya in the March 4<sup>th</sup> national elections. Just as President Moi and leaders of the opposition had done in 1998 in a show of unity, President Uhuru Kenyatta joined other leaders, including his challengers in the March 4<sup>th</sup> presidential

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<sup>225</sup> The first was the December 31<sup>st</sup>, 1980 bombing of the Norfolk Hotel in Nairobi, then owned by the Blocks, a Jewish family. The second attack was the November 28<sup>th</sup>, 2002 simultaneous attack on Paradise Hotel, Kikambala and an Arkia flight departing from Mombasa, both owned by Israelis.

<sup>226</sup> Church conventions held in the open to preach and win converts to Christianity.

<sup>227</sup> The first of the five pillars of Islam asserting a Muslim’s expression of faith and states that “There is no god but God and Muhammad is the prophet of God”.

<sup>228</sup> Anonymous attribution. *Daily Nation*, September 23<sup>rd</sup> 2013.

elections, Raila Odinga<sup>229</sup> and Musalia Mudavadi,<sup>230</sup> in a press conference at State House, Nairobi. Again this turned out to be another ‘spur of the moment’ demonstration of unity as soon thereafter, while addressing a Coalition for Reform and Democracy (CORD) Parliamentary Group (PG) meeting on the 19<sup>th</sup> November, 2013, Raila Odinga insinuated that the Westgate attack could have been a conspiracy plotted by the Jubilee leadership to enable the President and his deputy to be excused from attending to the criminal cases facing them at the International Criminal Court in the Hague, Netherlands.<sup>231</sup> In the official PG statement<sup>232</sup> (29<sup>th</sup> October, 2013) they called

“upon the President to immediately form an independent judicial commission of inquiry to establish the circumstances behind the planning and execution of the attack and the subsequent conduct of public officials and institutions including the Disciplined Forces and the National Security Intelligence Service (NSIS)”.

It is an allegation that was countenanced by the President’s ruling coalition, thereby provoking political bickering that was detrimental to the country’s healing process after the terror attack and the acrimonious Presidential election dispute settlement by the Supreme Court. It is against this premise that this study notes that it might be necessary for Kenyans to seek national healing and unity in processes that exclude current political manoeuvring which has sadly demonstrated an inability and unwillingness to move beyond the *ethnicalized* nature of politics that has been inherited from the previous regimes. Their statements and exhortations to national unity in the immediate aftermath of the tragedy were apparently only rhetorical, going by the statement attributed to CORD and its leadership.

Hope for a Kenyan nation that is devoid of ethnic posturing is provided, albeit in a simple way, by a non-state-driven memorial event organized on the 21<sup>st</sup> October, 2013, exactly one month after the Westgate Shopping Mall tragedy, which excluded any major politicians and

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<sup>229</sup> Leader of Coalition for Reform and Democracy (CORD) and went to the Supreme Court to dispute the election results. In condemning the terrorists, he stated that “...this is not the time for grandstanding, it is not the time for partisan politics but a time to unite the country together and that the Kenyan spirit has been demonstrated by the Kenyans who came forward yesterday to assist the victims of the attack... we want to appeal to all Kenyans to come together... we want to assure the government that we will work together to address the security situation in the whole country...” in a K24TV statement on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2013.

<sup>230</sup> Contested the Presidency under the banner of Amani coalition.

<sup>231</sup> Following the post-election violence of 2007/8, investigations by the International Criminal Court identified and named six persons as being culpable in the planning and execution of murder, rape and forcible eviction of victims from their homes. Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto were among those named long before they ascended to power as President and Deputy President respectively.

<sup>232</sup> Cordkenya.blogspot.co.uk



religious leaders. The memorial was planned for Karura Forest by Friends of Karura Forest (FKF) in conjunction with the families of those who had lost relatives or sustained injuries and attended by mourners from various races, religious inclinations and ethnicities, therefore, giving the crowd of about 400 people, a ‘We are One feeling.’ The theme of ‘oneness’ dominated the event as was demonstrated in the speeches and activities on the day.

The event started at exactly 11.30 am, the time when the terrorists fired their first shot. Timing the event to coincide with the time the terrorists struck is a way of bringing the memories of that past to the ‘now time.’ The singing of the national anthem in Swahili was the first event performed after the participants had completed the procession walk that had started from the Karura forest gate to the memorial spot. Then Christian, Islamic and Sikh prayers were recited to remember all victims who perished in the tragedy. There was a performance of a Hindu song by a band of juniors from the Hindu community, which was then followed by a choir dressed in uniform mirroring the proposed national dress, belting out renditions of patriotic songs in conformity with the theme of the day.



Fig. 7.2: A Kenyan choir sings at the Westgate Memorial, Karura. 21<sup>st</sup> October 2013.  
AP Press/Ben Curtis.

Performing the national anthem in Swahili, the national language spoken by a majority of Kenyans, patriotic songs and the uniform with a collar in colours of the national flag were symbolic acts of identity and nationalism. This was meant to pass the message to the terrorists that though scarred, the tragedy was not going to intimidate, divide, nor cause despondency amongst Kenyans.

When he rose to speak, Prof. Njuguna Karanja, the chair of FKF – who lost a nephew – exhorted the victims and their relatives to remain united stating that though “the memory of the tragedy hurts, it saddens us but it must not break us. We are one and have come to remind ourselves to build a nation that all can live in, young and old, white and black, Christian and Muslim, Hindu and Jain” (AFP News Agency, 2013). This encompasses all those living in Kenya, citizens and non-citizens, as the tragedy did not choose its victims. In the crowd were people with flags from different countries, among them the U.S, France, Ghana, China and France, countries whose citizens died in the tragedy.

He announced that a one-hectare Memorial Park, Amani<sup>233</sup> Garden, would be devoted to the memory of the victims of the Westgate Shopping Mall tragedy. He added that the choice of Karura forest was symbolic as it had become a place where people in all walks of life walk and jog, while children play in the serenity of the quiet and peaceful nature of the forest. Taking the cue from Prof. Karanja, Mr Sharad Rao, FKF’s vice chair noted that some of those who died and their families were frequent visitors of Karura forest, which is international in character and had truly become a place where people in all walks of faith, culture and traditions meet (Obuya, 2013). To launch the garden, families and relatives of those killed in the attack planted a tree sapling for each of the 70 victims lost to the tragedy. Planting of trees to remember a tragic event, as discussed in Chapter 2, is a way to symbolize hope and rebirth in many traditional African societies.

A memorial plaque containing names of victims of the Westgate Shopping Mall tragedy, onto which wreaths were laid, was unveiled on this occasion. Mwangi (2013) notes that the chairman intimated plans for a Memorial Park on the scale of the August 7<sup>th</sup> 1998 Memorial Park to commit to memory victims of the Westgate Shopping Mall tragedy. Whereas the shape and scale of the proposed memorial is difficult to contemplate at the moment, the idea

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<sup>233</sup> Swahili for peace.

that it has been suggested arguably points at the growing recognition that such visual aids could catalyse the provision of closure to, and inscription to memory of, traumatic tragedies resulting in the death of many people. Inscription of names in a memorial helps those who



Fig.7.3: A relative observes the memorial plaque containing names of victims of the Westgate Shopping Mall during memorial held on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2013. (Photo: Ben Curtis, 2013).

mourn to come to terms with their tragedy by enabling them to either touch or read the names (Winter, 1995: 115; Benton, 2010). This event arguably prefigures the kind of thinking that will inform the conceptualisation of the proposed memorial to be erected to the memory of the victims of the Westgate Shopping Mall. Visual and performing art, as demonstrated on the occasion of this commemoration, will likely be part of the new monument.

As this study draws to an end I am able to identify several lines of enquiry, which seem worthy of future enquiry.

### 7.3 Recommendations for Further Research

Islamic radicalisation along the Kenyan Coast is a subject that my respondents considered sensitive, if not dangerous, to discuss openly. It is noted that radicalisation of Muslim youth in Kenya, especially with the recently reported (Onsarigo & Otieno, 2014) youth radicalisation workshops in the Masjid Musa mosque in Mombasa, the mosque's invasion by

the police and the resultant violence, is a matter of grave concern. This study, therefore, suggests that further investigations need to be undertaken to ascertain the full extent of the radicalisation of youth in Kenya as it could lead to further terrorist attacks in the country if the phenomenon is not properly understood. There was a challenge in accessing published literature on terrorism in Kenya because it is a current phenomenon hence the reliance on newspaper sources, especially for Chapter 6. I however believe that this does not compromise the reliability of this data as other sources such as key-informant interviews with people reputed to be knowledgeable in contemporary cases of terrorism in Kenya were used to complement newspaper reports.

What impacts has terrorism had on interfaith relations in Kenya? This study has observed that the recent terror attacks on churches have bred interfaith animosities between Muslims and Christians, which, if not checked, could accelerate and engender serious interfaith conflicts. Thus, more focussed research on interfaith relations in the wake of terrorism in Kenya is recommended.

In Chapter 2, this study identified with the claim that 'traditional African communities' did not build monuments to commemorate tragic events that led to mass deaths in the past, but instead engaged in ceremonies to re-connect with ancestral spirits that may have been 'wronged' and thereby allowed such atrocities to happen (Mbithi, 1991), and planted peace trees. This explains the incorporation of peace trees in the designs of the August 7th Memorial Park, the inclusion of a tree planting approach in the activities of PBKC in Uasin Gishu County and the planting of 70 trees in the Amani Memorial Gardens in memory of those who died in the Westgate Shopping Mall tragedy. This study was not able to investigate the contribution of these 'peace trees' to the creation of memory and traumatic memory healing, though they appeared a consistent component in processes of memorialisation. Further investigation in this area would be useful.

Fieldwork data suggests that the Peace Builder's Kids Club clubs in Uasin Gishu County are engaged in outreach activities that are impacting positively on inter-ethnic understanding in their communities. There is, however, a need to monitor and measure the clubs' activities over a longer period of time in order to ascertain its long-term impacts on peace building and national cohesion.

Finally, the recent attack on Westgate Shopping Mall and the on-going Islamic radicalisation of youth in Kenya means that this study's narrative does not stop here. It will need to be continued.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Acronyms

ADRA	Adventist Development Relief Association
AFP	Agence France-Presse
AIAI	Al-Ittihad Al-Islami
ACCTI	Amani Counselling Centre and Training Institute
AMREF	African Medical Research Foundation
AP	Associated Press
ASBVA	August Seventh Bomb-blast Victims Association
ATPU	Anti-Terrorist Police Unit
AWI	Association for Widows and Injured
BM	British Museum
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIC	Constitutional Implementation Committee
CNN	Cable News Network
CORD	Coalition for Reform and Democracy
DC	District Commissioner
DP	Democratic Party
DSM	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual
EACTI	East Africa Counter-Terrorism Initiative
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FKF	Friends of Karura Forest
FORD	Forum for Reform and Democracy
GEMA	Gikuyu, Embu and Meru Association
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICU	Islamic Court Union
ID	Identification Card
IED	Improvised Explosive Device

ILAPK	Islamic Liberation Army for the People of Kenya
IPK	Islamic Party of Kenya
JK	Joyce Kezio
KADU	Kenya African Democratic Union
KAMATUSA	Kalenjin, Maasai, Turkana and Samburu Association
KANU	Kenya African National Union
KAR	King African Rifles
KAU	Kenya African Union
KCSE	Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education
KDF	Kenya Defense Force
K-HURINET	Kenya Human Rights Network
KMA	Kenya Medical Association
KNBS	Kenya National Bureau of Statistics
KPU	Kenya Peoples Union
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party
MMWVA	Mau Mau War Veterans Association
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MUHURI	Muslim Human Rights Organization
MYC	Muslim Youth Centre
NARC	National Rainbow Coalition
NCEC	National Convention Executive Council
NCIC	National Cohesion and Integration Commission
NDP	National Development Party
NFD	Northern Frontier District
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NMK	National Museums of Kenya
NSIS	National Security Intelligence Service
ODM	Orange Democratic Movement
OR	Operation Recovery
PBKC	Peace Builder's Kids Club
PFLP	Patriotic Front for the Liberation of Palestine
PG	Parliamentary Group

PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
PM	Prime Minister
PNU	Party of National Unity
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Front
SUPKEM	Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims
TFG	Transitional Federal Government
TSC	Teachers Service Commission
UK	United Kingdom
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
US	United States of America



## Appendix 2: Table of secondary sources reviewed during the study

Documents reviewed	Nature of data elicited
Newspaper reports on the bomb blast and the annual commemorations	Generated data on what exactly transpired in the aftermath of the blast, the planning and execution of the attack, the rescue efforts, suffering by the survivors, the August 7th Memorial Park, the annual commemorations and the wider terrorism context.
Minutes of meetings of the Memorial Park Trustees	Elicited data pertaining to the processes towards the establishment of the August 7th Memorial Park, including the formation of a board of trustees to oversee its affairs, funding and fundraising efforts, designs and the management of the Park and later the construction of the Documentation Centre.
U.S. embassy reports and cables	Generated data on the U.S. government involvement in the rescue efforts, confidential reports on prior assessment of security concerns for the U.S. Nairobi, the contribution of U.S. government in support of victims and survivors' families, new strategies to fight terrorism in the eastern Africa region, and the role of the U.S. government in the affairs of the August 7th Memorial Park.
Speeches made during official launch of the Memorial Park and in the annual commemorations	Engendered data on memories of the attack, the suffering and trauma engendered by the victims' families and survivors, quest for justice and compensation; and the functioning of the Memorial Park.
AMREF reports	Generated data on the types of trauma suffered and the interventions for trauma management techniques.

August 7th Memorial Park documents	Elicited data on the functioning of the Park as a site of memory, process towards the establishment and management of the Memorial Park, the activities of the Peace Builder's Kids Club, mediation of memory and the public perception of the Memorial Park and the Documentation Centre.
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**Appendix 3: Letter from the U.S. Ambassador to Kenya, Michael Ranneberger, to Kenya's Prime Minister, Raila Odinga, on the need for the Kenyan government to assist the survivors of the 1998 Nairobi terror attack.**

April 20, 2009

Dear Mr. Prime Minister:

Thank you for meeting with me last week and I appreciate that you are grappling with critical issues of state at this juncture. While I hesitate to add another issue to your government's agenda at this time, there is one such issue – that of moral and material support for the victims and survivors of the 1998 bombing - that I believe requires attention in the very near future.

I am writing to appeal to you to meet with leaders of Kenyan organizations who represent the interests of the thousands of Kenyan citizens who were killed or injured in the 7 August 1998 bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi and to initiate a dialogue between the Government of Kenya and the families and survivors that would help these people to normalise their lives.

Your participation – and powerful speech – at the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary commemoration last August was well-received and welcomed, particularly your acknowledgement of the suffering of these people and the need to help them normalise their lives: “The unity among political leaders following the 1998 bombing was short lived. That is one reason why we were unable to more effectively address the suffering of the survivors. In addition, in the passage of time, other political crises and concerns led to our nation as a whole to not pay as much attention as was needed by the survivors. But from the intense interest that this 10th anniversary has kindled, I think you will see a more organised national philanthropic spirit tackling the issues that bedevil survivors...In conclusion, let me once again express my solidarity to the families of all those who have died, and to the survivors who despite their suffering continue to struggle to normalise their lives. Kenyans must do more to help all of you.”

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His Excellency

Raila Odinga

Prime Minister of Kenya,

Nairobi

My staff and I have been engaged in an active dialogue with the leaders of these organizations. They have repeatedly requested our/USG assistance to help them and their families cope with the continuing hardships – physical, emotional, and economic. Many of these people benefited from the five-year package of assistance that the U.S. Congress approved and USAID provided from 1998-2003, totaling some \$42.3 million. But this special assistance program terminated on September 30, 2003 and the U.S. Congress has not renewed it. As a result, the Executive Branch/Department of State/U.S. Embassy has exhausted all means of funding/assisting these people. And it is my understanding that the U.S. Congress has considered several times -- but decisively rejected -- a proposal to authorize compensation for the victims, be they American, Kenyan or Tanzanian.

But the hardships these people and their families face did not end in 2003. Some have coped but it is our impression that many – we do not know how many -- are not coping well at all. I believe that there continues to be a need to assist bona fide survivors and families of those killed. Immediate cases in point: six survivors with spinal injuries are in need of follow-up neurosurgery; an orphan (one parent died in the bombing and the other died earlier this year of unrelated causes) is in need of basic support and school fees; and many need continued post-trauma counseling.

I understand that Paul Wala, the chairman of the *7<sup>th</sup> August, 1998 Bomb Blast Victims Association (Kenya)* has been in correspondence with your office (copies attached) to set a date for a meeting with you. I urge you to consider his request and arrange to meet with him as well as the representatives of other survivor/victim groups, at the earliest opportunity.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Very sincerely,

Michael E. Ranneberger  
Ambassador

**Appendix 4: The old district boundaries of Kenya now converted to Counties after the Kenya 2010 constitutional changes.**



Source: <http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-9nD-iTfXyxA/UpLP6XWTm0I/AAAAAAAAA148/EwJ6JkqP6GA/s1600/Counties+In+Kenya.png>

**Appendix 5: Newspaper coverage of the rescue efforts in the *Daily Nation* and *East African Standard*.**

Date	<i>East African Standard</i>	<i>Daily Nation</i>
10.08.1998	‘It’s a Miracle.’ <sup>234</sup>	‘Mother, son come out alive’
12.08.1998	‘Hope for Rose fades.’ <sup>235</sup>	
12.08.1998	‘Brother tells of horrid search for missing kin.’ <sup>236</sup>	
12.08.1998	‘Thank you for saving my life.’ <sup>237</sup>	
13.08.2013		‘Goodbye Kenya’s Rose’
14.08.1998	‘I mourn my Mum Rose.’ <sup>238</sup>	
14.08.1998	‘Rose, a hope that withered, expired, trapped in rubble’.	
15.08.1998	‘Row mounts over bomb victim Rose.’ <sup>239</sup>	
16.08.1998		‘Fair tribute for a theatre man for all seasons.’ <sup>240</sup> ‘How we escaped from Hell.’ <sup>241</sup> ‘Burial date for Rose’

<sup>234</sup> The story of Akinyi Odindo and her son, Gabriel, who were rescued alive from Cooperative Bank building 36 hours after the bombing.

<sup>235</sup> The head of the Kenya Army Search and Rescue team, General Agoi, is quoted.

<sup>236</sup> Joseph Koimburi on finding the body of his brother at the City Mortuary.

<sup>237</sup> Details the rescuing of Sammy Nganga from the rubble of Ufundi Cooperative House, 36 hours later.

<sup>238</sup> Philip Githuka, Roses’ son.

<sup>239</sup> A report on the family dispute on where Rose should be buried, and by who?

<sup>240</sup> An article on Abel Mutegi Njeru, a thespian who died in the process of rescue at the Cooperative Bank House.

<sup>241</sup> The piece reports the rescue of Francis Njenga and Joseph Gachoka who both worked in Ufundi Cooperative building.

## **Appendix 6: Schools with registered Peace Builder's Kids Clubs**

### **Schools in the program**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Name of School</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>County</b>
1	Catholic Parochial Primary	CBD	Nairobi
2	Gatoto Primary	Mukuru Slums	Nairobi
3	Kongoni	South C	Nairobi
4	Mukuru Kwa Njenga Primary	Embakasi	Nairobi
5	Logos Christian School	State House Rd	Nairobi
6	Mariakani Primary	South B	Nairobi
7	Moi Educational Centre	Nairobi West	Nairobi
8	Mukuru Kayaba Primary	Mukuru Kayaba	Nairobi
9	Nairobi South Primary	South B	Nairobi
10	Our Lady of Mercy High	South B	Nairobi
11	Our Lady of Nazareth	Embakasi	Nairobi
12	Peponi House Prep	Lower Kabete	Nairobi
13	REM School	South C	Nairobi
14	Reuben Primary	Embakasi	Nairobi
15	St Catherine Primary	South B	Nairobi
16	St Elizabeth Primary	Lunga Lunga	Nairobi
17	St. Theresa's Girls Primary	Eastleigh	Nairobi
18	Loreto Convent Valley Rd	Valley Road	Nairobi
19	Makini School	Off Ngong Road	Nairobi
20	Riara School	Off Ngong Road	Nairobi
21	Jonathan Gloag Academy	Mbagathi Way	Nairobi
22	Rose of Sharon Academy	Ngong Road	Nairobi
23	Nairobi Academy	Karen	Nairobi
24	Westlands Primary	Westlands	Nairobi
25	Compuera Academy	State House Road	Nairobi
26	St. Georges Primary	Kilimani	Nairobi
27	Braeside School	Lavington	Nairobi
28	Loresho Primary	Loresho	Nairobi
29	Nairobi Primary	State House	Nairobi
30	Kileleshwa Primary	Kileleshwa	Nairobi
31	St. Mary's Primary	Lavington	Nairobi
32	Cheploskei Primary	Burnt Forest/Tarakwa	Uasin Gishu
33	Sambul Primary	Burnt Forest/Tarakwa	Uasin Gishu
34	Cheptiret Primary	Burnt Forest/Tarakwa	Uasin Gishu
35	Koiluget Primary	Burnt Forest/Tarakwa	Uasin Gishu
36	Tarakwa Primary	Burnt Forest/Tarakwa	Uasin Gishu
37	Ngeria West Primary	Burnt Forest/Tarakwa	Uasin Gishu

38	Chesegem Primary	Burnt Forest/Tarakwa	Uasin Gishu
39	Boderfarm Primary	Eldoret Municipality	Uasin Gishu
40	Boror Primary	Burnt Forest/Tarakwa	Uasin Gishu
41	Central Primary	Eldoret Municipality	Uasin Gishu
42	Kamukunji Primary	Eldoret Municipality	Uasin Gishu
43	Kapkeben Primary	Eldoret Municipality	Uasin Gishu
44	Kapyemit Primary	Eldoret Municipality	Uasin Gishu
45	Kiambaa Primary	Burnt Forest/Tarakwa	Uasin Gishu
46	Lainguse Primary	Burnt Forest/Tarakwa	Uasin Gishu
47	Langas Primary	Eldoret Municipality	Uasin Gishu
48	Munyaka Primary	Eldoret Municipality	Uasin Gishu
49	Race Course Primary	Eldoret Municipality	Uasin Gishu
50	Moi-Marula Primary	Eldoret Municipality	Uasin Gishu
51	Township Primary	Eldoret Municipality	Uasin Gishu



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