

The Challenge of Regime-Based Ethnic Exclusion to Nation Building in the Daniel Moi Presidency in Kenya, 1978-2003



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Article's History

Submitted: 2nd September 2025

Revised: 15th September 2025

Published: 18th September 2025

Abstract

Aim: Since attaining independence in 1963, Kenya's efforts at nation-building have been consistently undermined by regime-based ethnic exclusion. Successive administrations have privileged particular ethnic groups, thereby entrenching inequality and fostering social fragmentation. This study sought to examine the challenge of regime-based ethnic exclusion to nation-building in Kenya during the Daniel Moi presidency, from 1978 to 2002.

Methods: This study was anchored in Ethnic Identity Theory and Political Patronage Theory. A historical research design was adopted to comprehensively investigate the impact of regime-driven ethnic exclusion on nation-building in Kenya during the period 1978–2003. Data collection was conducted through interview schedules featuring open-ended questions, allowing respondents the flexibility to provide detailed and context-specific insights. The study employed a combination of simple random sampling and stratified sampling techniques to ensure representativeness across Kenya's diverse population, considering ethnicity, region, and professional background. Data obtained were analyzed qualitatively through systematic content review and analysis.

Results: The study observed that the Daniel Moi Presidency between 1978 and 2003 was marked by heightened levels of ethnic exclusivism and patronage politics that favored certain communities while neglecting others. This entrenched system of ethnic favoritism led to significant dissatisfaction among various ethnic groups, prompting increasing demands for political inclusivity and justice.

Conclusion: The regime's authoritarian practices, combined with the concentration of state resources and authority within a narrow elite, significantly eroded national unity and undermined democratic principles.

Recommendation: To prevent ethnic exclusivism and strengthen national unity, this study recommends merit-based governance through fair appointments, independent oversight, constitutional safeguards, and policies that promote inter-ethnic trust and accountability.

Keywords: *Ethnic exclusion, nation-building, patronage politics, ethnic mobilization*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Regime-based ethnic exclusion refers to the deliberate marginalization of specific ethnic groups from political power and state resources by ruling regimes. This practice is often employed to consolidate authority, suppress dissent and maintain regime stability. Such exclusionary strategies are prevalent in various political systems, particularly in postcolonial states, where the manipulation of ethnic identities serves as a tool for political control. Scholarly analyses highlight that political exclusion in Africa has been a persistent issue, with leaders using exclusion to neutralize rivals and maintain power, often leading to destabilization and violence (Beiser-McGrath & Metternich, 2021).

In the Russian context, White and Saikkonen (2023) examine how changes in native language policies affected electoral support in ethnic regions, illustrating the political consequences of marginalizing minority groups. This global dimension underscores the pervasive nature of ethnic exclusion in authoritarian governance. Addressing regime-based ethnic exclusion requires deliberate efforts to promote inclusivity, equitable resource distribution and genuine power-sharing arrangements. Without such measures, the cycle of exclusion and conflict is likely to persist, undermining stability and development.

Regime-based ethnic exclusion in Kenya refers to the deliberate marginalization of certain ethnic groups from political power and access to public resources by those in control of the state. This phenomenon has shaped Kenya's political and socio-economic landscape since independence, often fueling ethnic tensions, electoral violence and uneven development. Successive post-independence governments have favored ethnic groups from which the president hails. Under Jomo Kenyatta's regime (1963–1978), the Kikuyu community gained significant control over land, political appointments and state resources, to the exclusion of others (Khisa, 2019).

Nation-building refers to the process through which a society develops a shared identity, cohesive political institutions and stable governance structures that promote unity, economic development and social harmony (Smith, 1991). It involves the deliberate efforts by a state or political leadership to foster national unity among diverse ethnic, cultural or social groups, often in post-colonial or conflict-affected countries where divisions run deep (Huntington, 1991; Anderson, 1983). At its core, nation-building seeks to construct a national identity that transcends sub-national loyalties such as ethnicity, clan, or religion. This identity is critical for legitimacy, social cohesion and political stability. It also involves the establishment of political institutions that represent all citizens equitably and foster participation (Brubaker, 2004). These institutions help to maintain law and order, manage resources and provide public goods in a way that is seen as legitimate and fair (Posner, 2005).

The legacies of colonialism, including arbitrary borders and favoritism toward certain groups, complicate nation-building projects (Herbst, 2000). Moreover, globalization and transnational identities sometimes challenge national cohesion, as people feel allegiance to ethnic or religious communities beyond the state (Anderson, 1983). Successful nation-building contributes to political stability, economic growth, and social peace. Countries like Singapore and Rwanda have made deliberate efforts to foster national identity and inclusive governance, despite ethnic diversity and histories of conflict (Reid, 2012; Longman, 2011). Conversely, failure in nation-building can lead to civil wars, secessionist movements and persistent

instability, as seen in Somalia, South Sudan and parts of the Balkans (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004; Laitin, 1998). Nation-building is a complex but essential process for countries emerging from colonial rule, conflict or fragmentation.

This study argues that ethnic exclusion undermines nation-building in Kenya by weakening trust in state institutions, fueling perceptions of inequality, and deepening divisions among communities. When access to political power, jobs, and resources is based on ethnicity rather than fairness, marginalized groups feel alienated and excluded from the national project. This erodes national unity, encourages ethnic-based political mobilization, and increases the risk of conflict and violence. Ultimately, exclusionary politics weaken democratic governance, stall social cohesion, and prevent the development of a shared sense of national identity, all of which are essential for sustainable nation-building. It is against this background that this study examined the challenge of regime-based ethnic exclusion to nation-building in Kenya during the Daniel Moi presidency, from 1978 to 2002.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Since Kenya attained independence in 1963, nation-building has been a central goal in the country's political and social development agenda. Nation-building, understood as the process of constructing a unified national identity and creating inclusive political, social, and economic institutions, has faced persistent challenges in Kenya. Chief among these challenges is regime-based ethnic exclusion, where successive governments have systematically marginalized certain ethnic groups from political power, economic resources and participation in governance.

Regime-based ethnic exclusion in Kenya is closely tied to the country's colonial legacy and post-independence political dynamics. Colonial rule entrenched ethnic divisions by privileging certain groups for administrative roles and creating competition among communities for resources and influence (Barkan & Mati, 2012). After independence, political elites adopted similar exclusionary strategies, often consolidating power by favoring their own ethnic groups while marginalizing others (Ngunyi, 2015). This strategy was used to maintain political dominance, control state resources and secure loyalty from favored communities, thereby institutionalizing ethnic exclusion in Kenya's governance system (Branch & Cheeseman, 2017).

Socially, regime-based ethnic exclusion undermines the development of a shared national identity by reinforcing ethnic loyalties over national unity (Kanyinga, 2014). When political and economic opportunities are distributed along ethnic lines, marginalized groups tend to retreat into their ethnic communities for security and identity affirmation, further fragmenting the nation. This fragmentation impedes social cohesion and weakens the fabric of the Kenyan state.

Economically, ethnic exclusion has contributed to uneven development and entrenched regional disparities. Communities aligned with ruling regimes often benefit from increased state investment, job opportunities, and access to resources, while excluded groups face systemic neglect (Mwangi, 2015). These disparities fuel economic grievances and perpetuate cycles of poverty in marginalized areas, which in turn exacerbate political exclusion and instability.

The challenge of regime-based ethnic exclusion also affects reconciliation and healing. Historical grievances remain unresolved and the absence of a comprehensive national dialogue on ethnic inclusion exacerbates divisions (Kagwanja, 2018). Without addressing the root causes of exclusion, Kenya risks perpetuating cycles of ethnic competition, violence and fragmentation, which undermine the prospects of sustainable nation building. Regime-based ethnic exclusion from 1978 has posed a fundamental challenge to Kenya's nation-building by fostering division, inequality and conflict. This exclusion has eroded political legitimacy, deepened social fragmentation and entrenched economic disparities.

1.2 General Objective of the Study

To examine the challenge of regime-based ethnic exclusion to nation-building in the Daniel Moi Presidency in Kenya, between 1978 and 2002.

1.2.1 Specific Objectives

- i. To analyze how the Moi regime perpetuated ethnic exclusion in political, social, and economic spheres.
- ii. To assess the consequences of ethnic exclusion on national unity, social cohesion, and development during Moi's tenure.
- iii. To evaluate reform efforts aimed at addressing exclusion and their implications for nation building

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

From 1978 to 2002, Kenya's political landscape remained entrenched in ethnic exclusivism, despite changes in presidential leadership. This era spans the latter part of Jomo Kenyatta's presidency and the entirety of Daniel arap Moi's rule. Both regimes centralized state power and deployed ethnicity as a tool for political dominance, with government appointments, public resource allocation, and development projects disproportionately favoring communities associated with those in power primarily the Kikuyu under Kenyatta and the Kalenjin under Moi (Klopp, 2001; Kramon & Posner, 2016). The instrumentalization of ethnic identities entrenched patterns of exclusion, marginalizing many communities from the national development agenda (Burgess et al., 2015). Furthermore, under Moi's leadership, state-sponsored violence and ethnic clashes especially during election periods in the 1990s were used to intimidate opposition strongholds and manipulate electoral outcomes (Adar & Munyae, 2001; Human Rights Watch, 2002).

In response, Kenyan citizens engaged in various forms of resistance, from the underground Mwakenya movement to broader civil society campaigns for multiparty democracy (Wrong, 2009). This literature review examines the persistence of ethnic exclusion and the citizen responses during this period, using scholarly evidence to explore the structural and sociopolitical mechanisms that sustained ethnic favoritism and undermined inclusive nation-building.

The Moi regime (1978–2002) continued and, in some ways, deepened ethnic exclusivism by promoting the Kalenjin as the political and economic elite. Moi's government strategically distributed state resources and appointments along ethnic lines to secure loyalty and maintain political control, a phenomenon scholars describe as "ethnic favoritism" (Klopp, 2001;

Kramon & Posner, 2016). This period also saw an increase in ethnic violence, particularly in the 1990s during the reintroduction of multiparty politics, where political elites often manipulated ethnic mobilization to intimidate opposition supporters and manipulate electoral outcomes (Adar & Munyae, 2001).

Ethnic exclusivism was thus not merely a byproduct of social differences but a politically constructed mechanism for maintaining power and resource allocation, deeply embedded in Kenya's history from colonialism through the post-independence regimes (Adar & Munyae, 2001). Understanding this historical trajectory is crucial for analyzing the persistence of ethnic-based politics and the challenges it poses to nation-building and democratic governance in Kenya.

Moi's rule was characterized by an authoritarian governance style, wherein repression and strict control were used to maintain political dominance. The regime frequently employed state security agencies, especially the Special Branch, to suppress dissent and intimidate opposition figures (Adar & Munyae, 2001). Political opponents were

The reintroduction of multiparty politics in the early 1990s coincided with a surge in ethnically motivated violence, most notably in the Rift Valley region. Moi's government was implicated in orchestrating or condoning violence aimed at displacing opposition supporters, particularly Kikuyu settlers who were seen as a threat to the Kalenjin political dominance (Branch & Cheeseman, 2008). State complicity in these clashes was documented extensively by the Akiwumi Commission of Inquiry (1999), which found evidence of government involvement in mobilizing militias and directing attacks to intimidate opposition voters. Human Rights Watch (2002) further documented how state security forces often turned a blind eye to violence or directly participated, undermining the rule of law. This politically instigated ethnic violence was strategically employed to alter the demographic and political landscape in favor of Moi's KANU party, aiming to create ethnically homogeneous voting blocs.

The violence resulted in mass displacement, loss of life and deepened mistrust between ethnic communities, significantly undermining national cohesion efforts (Branch & Cheeseman, 2008). This period revealed how state institutions could be weaponized to sustain ethnic exclusivism and political control through violent means, with lasting consequences for Kenya's socio-political stability.

Moi's regime thrived on a system of ethnic patronage and clientelism, where access to state resources and development opportunities was contingent upon political loyalty, often mediated through ethnic identity (Barkan, 1994). Ethnic elites acted as gatekeepers, distributing favors, contracts, and development projects to their communities in exchange for electoral support (Kramon & Posner, 2016). This patronage network reinforced ethnic divisions by incentivizing loyalty to one's ethnic bloc over national interests.

Economic policies and resource distribution during Moi's regime disproportionately favored the Kalenjin and allied ethnic groups, contributing to significant economic marginalization of others (Mutunga, 1998). Land allocations, business licenses, and public procurement contracts were often channeled to loyalists within Moi's ethnic base, reinforcing economic disparities along ethnic lines (Burgess et al., 2015).

International actors, including donor countries and organizations, exerted pressure on Kenya during Moi's presidency to adopt multiparty democracy and respect human rights. However, their influence was ambivalent and sometimes contradictory. While pushing for political reforms, some external actors supported Moi's regime or elites aligned with their strategic interests, inadvertently reinforcing ethnic divisions (Cliffe, 2008). Ethnic exclusivism under the Moi regime (1978–2002) deeply affected Kenya's political and social landscape, but it also generated robust citizen resistance. Kenyan citizens employed diverse strategies, ranging from organized political opposition and civil society activism to grassroots movements and cultural initiatives aimed at fostering national unity.

The 1990s were characterized by a surge in mass protests and advocacy campaigns organized by citizens demanding political reforms and an end to ethnic discrimination (Branch & Cheeseman, 2008). These protests were often the result of coalitions between opposition parties, civil society groups, and ordinary citizens across ethnic divides, united by the shared goal of democratic change. Notable demonstrations included protests following the introduction of the multiparty system in 1991, which highlighted widespread dissatisfaction with electoral irregularities and ethnic exclusion (Murunga & Nasong'o, 2007).

Kenyan scholars and intellectuals played a vital role in critiquing ethnic exclusivism and promoting alternative visions of national unity (Murunga & Nasong'o, 2007). Universities became centers for research and debate on the historical roots and contemporary consequences of ethnic politics. Academics produced empirical studies exposing how ethnic favoritism undermined governance, economic development, and social cohesion (Klopp, 2001). They also analyzed the ways in which colonial legacies persisted in post-independence politics, encouraging policymakers and civil society to address these structural issues.

The Kenyan media played an influential role in exposing the ethnic exclusivism and abuses of the Moi regime (Otieno, 2006). Despite tight government censorship, independent newspapers, radio stations, and emerging television channels provided platforms for alternative voices critical of ethnic discrimination. Investigative journalism uncovered instances of ethnic violence, corruption linked to ethnic patronage, and electoral manipulation, informing both domestic and international audiences (Branch & Cheeseman, 2008).

Traditional leaders and cultural institutions also responded to ethnic exclusivism by promoting dialogue, peace and coexistence (Otieno, 2006). Despite ethnic divisions being politicized, many elders and cultural custodians emphasized the importance of inter-ethnic harmony as foundational to community survival. In areas affected by ethnic violence, local elders mediated conflicts and organized reconciliation ceremonies aimed at healing wounds and rebuilding trust (Murunga & Nasong'o, 2007).

Kenyan diaspora communities also contributed significantly to resisting ethnic exclusivism through activism and transnational networks (Kanyinga, 2014). Exiled politicians, academics, and activists used their platforms abroad to advocate for democratic reforms and expose ethnic injustices under Moi's regime. Diaspora organizations collaborated with international human rights groups and foreign governments to lobby for sanctions, aid conditionality, and election monitoring missions that pressured Moi's government to respect political freedoms (Human Rights Watch, 2002).

2.1 Summary of Gaps in Reviewed Literature

The above-reviewed literature reveals several gaps. First, while existing studies document Moi's ethnic favoritism and patronage networks, they do not fully explore how regime-based exclusion directly undermined long-term nation-building efforts, particularly in shaping national identity and cohesion beyond his presidency. Second, there is limited analysis of how ordinary citizens and marginalized communities experienced and responded to exclusion, as much of the focus remains on elite politics and state institutions. Third, although the role of ethnic violence and state repression during the 1990s is well documented, insufficient attention has been given to how these practices institutionalized mistrust between ethnic groups and weakened prospects for inclusive governance. Fourth, the literature highlights the influence of international actors, but few studies systematically assess their contradictory roles in both enabling Moi's regime and pushing for reforms. Fifth, while colonial legacies are often mentioned, they are not adequately connected to the persistence of ethnic exclusion during Moi's era, leaving gaps in understanding its structural foundations. Finally, there is a lack of comparative perspectives with other African regimes where ethnicity shaped politics, which could offer broader insights into how regime-based exclusion constrains nation-building in diverse contexts.

3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This study investigated how regime-based ethnic exclusion influenced nation-building in Kenya between 1978 and 2003. The research employed a historical qualitative approach in investigating the role of regime-based ethnic exclusion in nation-building in Kenya during this period. Data was gathered by interviewing political analysts, leaders, church officials, trade unionists, lobby groups and public administrators as well as by analyzing documents such as government reports, policies, speeches and archives. The independent variable was ethnic exclusion, measured through government appointments, resource allocation, and political favoritism, while the dependent variable was nation-building, assessed via national unity, shared identity, equitable development, and interethnic cohesion.

The target population comprised approximately 2,000 individuals, including political analysts, leaders, church representatives, trade unionists, lobby groups, public administrators, and elderly citizens aged 65 and above, who had lived through multiple regimes. Stratified and random sampling ensured diverse and representative participation across regions and professional categories. Primary data was collected through in-depth interviews using open ended questions. Secondary data was collected through documentary analysis of government reports, parliamentary debates, policy documents, and newspapers. Validity was achieved through expert reviews, triangulation of data sources and alignment with theoretical frameworks. Ethical considerations included informed consent, confidentiality, and cultural sensitivity, while logistical issues such as translation and regional travel were addressed to ensure reliable and credible findings.

4.0 The Moi Regime and Entrenchment of Ethnic Exclusivism, 1978- 2003

Following the passing of Jomo Kenyatta, his vice-president, Daniel arap Moi, who held the vice-presidency from 1967 to 1978, assumed the presidency and the leadership of KANU. As noted in the preceding section, during Kenyatta's administration, both the political and economic spheres were predominantly controlled by small elite of Kikuyu individuals from

Kenyatta's native District of Kiambu. Adar and Munyae (1999) describe this faction, known as the Kiambu Mafia, as having undermined Kenyatta's nationalist and populist legacy, thereby alienating other ethnic groups and many Kikuyus who did not conform to their views.

In their analysis of the succession of Kenyatta in Kenya, Karimi and Ochieng' (1980) report that Moi's rise to power encountered resistance from the Kiambu Mafia. Politicians from Kenyatta's home District of Kiambu perceived the vice-president's forthcoming assumption of the presidency as a threat to their governmental positions and their capacity to maintain economic influence in the nation. They further assert that this group anticipated a leadership transition post-Kenyatta that would safeguard their ill-gotten wealth while simultaneously allowing for continued economic opportunities (Ibid, 1980). It is noteworthy that since his appointment as vice-president, Moi exhibited considerable loyalty to his superior, Jomo Kenyatta.

The Kiambu group, however, was unsuccessful in its attempt to amend the constitution and prevent Moi, who was the vice-president, from rising to power. Karimi and Ochieng (1980) observe that during the ninety-day timeframe, Moi managed to take control of the ruling party KANU and strengthen his position. In October 1978, there was minimal opposition to Moi's nomination as a presidential candidate at the KANU Delegates Conference. As the only candidate and with KANU being the sole party, his nomination was legally interpreted as an election to serve a full term as president. In the November 1979 elections, many members of the Kenyatta old guard were defeated by a faction loyal to Moi. With no opposition to hinder him, Moi solidified his role as the second President of the Republic of Kenya.

The presidency of Moi was characterized by the role of the executive powers being extended to levels never before and this enabled him to centralize the power, which enabled ethnic favoritism. Direct control was present: the legislature, the judiciary, provincial administration and even the civil society institutions were held at bay by the Office of the President. Kalenjin elites and their ethnically allied elites enjoyed strategic state appointments with the ruling coalition tied together by their access to public resources (Ajulu, 2002; Murunga & Nasonga, 2006; Cheeseman & Fisher, 2019).

Loyalists were appointed to the civil service, the judiciary and in parastatal boards and usually got these appointments on the basis of ethnic loyalty and in some cases even more so due to their ethnic loyalty than on professional merit. This centralization enabled Moi to protect the regime against the rule of law, whereby he used patronage to crush opposition and control election results. Consequently, having the state become associated with ethnicity to the degree of erasing the premise of equal citizenship and lowering governance to an ethnicized favor-merit style (Boone, 2014; Lynch, 2006; Oloo & Wepukhulu, 2021)

KANU's internal governance discouraged political pluralism and fostered ethnic exclusion. Leadership within the party was highly centralized, and ethnic loyalty played a decisive role in appointments and nominations (Kanyinga, 1998; Okoth-Ogendo, 1991; Steeves, 2006). Moi manipulated party organs to sideline dissenters and empower a loyal inner circle largely drawn from the Rift Valley. This concentration of power allowed him to reward allies from supportive ethnic communities while excluding those from politically oppositional regions. The marginalization of Luo, Kikuyu, and other ethnic leaders within the party was a key strategy for consolidating Moi's grip on power (Barkan & Chege, 1989; Ndegwa, 1997;

Nasong'o, 2007). KANU's exclusionary practices created an environment where ethnic alignment became the main pathway to national leadership, perpetuating a cycle of ethnicized access to power.

The development instigated during Moi regime by the state fixed spatial inequality whereby resources were directed unfairly to politically relevant ethnic regions. Northern Rift valley, regions of Coast and North Eastern Province were left out in their basic infrastructure, social services and economic investments (Kanyinga, 2006; Klopp, 2001; Mwenda, 2010; Anderson, 2005). Underdevelopment and insecurity took place in these areas and were associated with unproductive and even hostile regions. The effect of this was a divided state with pretty modernized urban centers which flourished under the state patronage and the underdeveloped rural edges. The ethnic and political factors have contributed to the road networks, school funding, and healthcare investment as some of the important areas where ethnical and political considerations were made other than the fair development demands. This legacy has carried on past the Moi era and contributes to poverty cycles and resentments among the marginalized, who started to conceive of the state as an instrument of exclusion and not a source of the common good.

Under Moi, the opportunity to exercise dissent was a key statecraft attribute especially following the 1982 constitutional amendment, which placed Kenya as a *de jure* one-party state. The dominance of the KANU was set in stone because the amendment practically criminalized opposition so criticism of the regime was not only politically dangerous but was also lawfully prosecutable (Widner, 1992). The Special Branch and General Service Unit (GSU) were security forces that raided the activity of political opponents, harassed, and arrested them. The arrest of such opposition leaders as Raila Odinga, Kenneth Matiba and Charles Rubia without trial depicted the zero-tolerance attitude of the regime to opposing view (Amnesty International, 1988). The norm is political oppression declared in the name of upholding law and order and this has made Kenya a surveillance state.

The civil society landscape in Kenya took shape in the 1980s amidst deepening authoritarianism. Organizations such as the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) began to challenge state hegemony by advocating for human rights and democratic governance (Katumba, 2004). Religious institutions provided alternative platforms for public discourse, especially as political space shrank under Moi's rule.

These efforts were often coordinated through pastoral letters and civic education programs, subtly promoting reformist agendas (Gifford, 2009). At the same time, professional organizations such as the Law Society of Kenya (LSK) used legal tools to resist repressive laws and support detained activists (Kanyinga, 1998). Despite harassment and threats, these civil actors played a foundational role in laying the groundwork for future political liberalization by fostering a counter-narrative to state propaganda.

The 1990s marked a turning point in Kenya's political history, driven by growing dissatisfaction with Moi's autocratic rule and mounting economic hardships. The clamor for reform culminated in widespread demands for a return to multiparty democracy (Gifford, 2009). This movement gained traction through both grassroots mobilization and elite defection from KANU, despite the regime's fierce resistance. State mechanisms such as the provincial administration and security forces were deployed to quash reformist voices, yet

pressure from civil society and dissident politicians intensified (Throup & Hornsby, 1998). The agitation set the stage for constitutional reforms, despite initial superficial concessions by the regime.

The establishment of the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (FORD) in 1991 signaled a unified front against KANU's one-party grip. Spearheaded by veteran politicians like Jaramogi Oginga Odinga and Kenneth Matiba, FORD brought together diverse ethnic and regional interests under a pro-reform agenda (Gifford, 2009). It provided a platform to consolidate opposition momentum while highlighting Moi's repressive governance. However, ideological and personal rivalries would later fragment the movement. Nevertheless, FORD's formation forced the Moi regime to acknowledge the strength of organized political dissent and catalyzed the repeal of Section 2A of the Constitution (Kanyinga, 2006).

Post-Cold War conditionality reshaped donor strategies, prioritizing democracy and governance over ideological alignment. In Kenya, Western governments and IFIs began linking aid to political reform such as respect for human rights, press freedom, and multiparty democracy (van de Walle, 2001). Aid conditionality displaced unconditional support for Moi, embedding governance criteria into lending (Biau & Biau, 2007). In 1991, the Paris Consultative Group suspended non-humanitarian aid, demanding political pluralism before resuming disbursement (World Bank, 2004). This shift disrupted the patronage-dependent political economy, compelling the regime to consider reforms (HRW, 1993). Donor leverage turned into a key catalyst for liberalization, sending a clear signal: undemocratic behavior would come at a financial cost. Consequently, external financial flows became instruments of political change, redefining the relationship between Kenya and its international partners at the Cold War's end.

Precisely, the 1990s marked a time when the clamor to reconstitute the Kenyan constitution gained a lot of steam as the shortcomings of the shallow concessions of multipartism became clear. Religious institutions, the civil society and those in opposition started to call upon a complete transformation of the constitutions to eliminate the dictatorial systems embedded in their governance systems in Kenya (Ghai & Cottrell, 2002). The rallies, citizen education meetings, and media campaigns advocated the notion of constitution review involving the wide-scale popular involvement (Mutunga, 1999). The establishment of the Constitution of Kenya Review Commission (CKRC), which was presided over by Yash Pal Ghai, was a milestone in the institutionalization of participatory systems (Murunga & Nasong, 2007). But the secretive nature of the review process by the state in the form of its parallel efforts in control and patronage-based politics posed a challenge to its integrity (Wanyande, 2003).

5.0 CONCLUSION

The study shows that ethnic exclusivism remained deeply entrenched in Kenya's politics during Daniel arap Moi's presidency (1978–2002), despite the earlier transition of power from Jomo Kenyatta. Moi intensified ethnic favoritism through patronage politics that privileged his Kalenjin community and allied groups while sidelining others. This system fostered widespread dissatisfaction, as marginalized communities increasingly demanded political inclusivity and justice. By centralizing state resources and authority, Moi weakened national unity and democratic values. The strategy of ethnic exclusion accelerated after the failed 1982 coup, which saw the systematic replacement of personnel from ethnic rival groups with loyalists from his

ethnic support base across the civil service, military, and provincial administration. This entrenched a governance system rooted in ethnic patronage rather than meritocracy, further deepening divisions in the country. This study recommends promoting inclusivity and merit-based governance through fair appointments, independent oversight, constitutional safeguards, and policies that foster inter-ethnic trust and accountability to prevent ethnic exclusivism and strengthen national unity.

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