

*PERFORMANCE AND DYNAMICS OF PUBLIC
PROTEST IN KENYA*

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For

TARIQ

In her silent mystic, her eloquent tenacity.

To

Susy, Kita and Yuro

Unpayable Debts, unforgivable

ABSTRACT

The use of public protest as a way of contention and mobilization for political change has been central to these changes, developing into a protest movement, a publicly expressed amalgam of the many transformative struggles Kenyan social and political landscape. However, in the recent years, *there has been evident shift in the forms and apparent goals of the protest movement from institutional/structural transformation to personal /group contests over the State structure as it is*. This shift has been aided by dramatization and aestheticization of protest events in the country.

Therefore, I explore protest as a form of political contention in Kenya through the lens of the Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT). I show that public protest in Kenya is a rational, goal-oriented action as the RMT anticipates; but also, highly dramatized and personalized. I read performance of public protest as a form of recruitment into the Kenyan political class. It has become adopted to divert genuine struggles for transformation, instead being employed in the state class contests for control of the State structures amongst themselves thus subverting the ideal goals of protest social movement.

Subsequently, I point out the inadequacy of RMT in explaining the Kenyan protest movement as it does not anticipate this contextual manipulative insertion of dramatization and personalization into the repertoires of protest, and propose that RMT needs analytic combination with state-class theory (SCT). Such an approach will appreciate the strengths of resource mobilization- the rationality and goal-orientation of protest actors; the character of State classes' relations of contention in contexts where the State is the ultimate vehicle for personal accumulation and social reproduction, and the particular forms of protest events' happenings. I further point out that the RTM needs testing in non-European/ core political

contexts such as Kenya where the State is manifestly a dominant dominion of the ruling elite while the popular sector is for the masses largely surviving on the fringes unless when expediently recruited for legitimating of sectoral claims.

To this end, I address the question: what is the motivation and meaning of protest in Kenya? Through this question, I sought to explore through selected testimonies and archival data, what makes people participate in the protest in Kenya, and what such protests means to different people in the country. Observing that changes have occurred in the way the protest events are enacted, from violent to peaceful and 'decent', I also explored the possible explanations of such changes within the context of rationality, dramatization and personalization of the politics of contention. From this, I suggest that the rationality of the emerging and shifting State class dominates and manipulates the nature and construct of the protest movement in Kenya as it controls and negotiates within itself, the control of the State structures for the accumulation, mobilization and distribution of socio-economic resources and socio-political reproduction. To that end, public protest has become dramatized to camouflage its composition and its class manipulation as well as legitimate itself as a decent negotiation strategy within the state class. There are shifts from the radical violence-prone protest of the early 90s to intra-state-class negotiated and legitimate protests which serve as opportunities for campaigns and power contestation within the political elite. Though the study finds that the resource mobilization theory offers appropriate conceptual tools for studying the Kenyan protest movements, it suggests, the approach be conceptually contextualized through the state-class reading of African politics in order to enable it account for the 'socio-cultural performative' of African protest and claim-making which are inherently aimed at personalized acquisition of state power..

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Though this contradicts my communal upbringing, the errors and inadequacies herein, lie at my doorstep.

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-----Chapter One-----

1.0 INTRODUCTION TO PROTEST MOVEMENT IN KENYA

1.1 Question and Answer: Summary of the Study

In the last twenty years, Kenyan politics has witnessed tremendous political changes. The use of public protest as a way of contention and mobilization for political change has been central to these changes. In many ways, it developed into a protest movement, the publicly expressed amalgam of the many transformative struggles Kenyan social and political landscape. However, in the recent years, *there has been evident shift in the forms and apparent goals of the protest movement from institutional/structural transformation to personal /group contests over the State structure as it is*. This shift has been aided by personalization through dramatization and aestheticization of protest events in the country.

Therefore, I explore protest as a form of political contention in Kenya through the lens of the Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT). I show that public protest in Kenya is a contextually rational and relationally goal-oriented action as the RMT anticipates; but also, personalized and dramatized. I read performance of public protest as a form of recruitment into the Kenyan political class. It has become adopted to divert genuine struggles for transformation, and is instead being employed in the state class contests for control of the State structures amongst themselves thus subverting the ideal goals of protest social movement.

Subsequently, I point out the inadequacy of RMT in explaining the Kenyan protest movement as it does not anticipate this contextual manipulative insertion of dramatized personalization into the repertoires of protest, and propose that RMT needs

contextualization into the Kenyan form of politics and claim-making through use of state-class theory (SCT). Such an approach will appreciate the strengths of resource mobilization- the rationality and goal-orientation of protest actors; the character of State classes' relations of contention in contexts where the State is the ultimate vehicle for personal accumulation and social reproduction, and the particular forms of protest events' happenings. I further point out that the RTM needs testing in non-European/ core political contexts such as Kenya where the State is manifestly a dominant dominion of the ruling elite while the popular sector is for the masses largely surviving on the fringes unless when expediently recruited for legitimating of sectoral claims.

To this end, I address the question: what is the motivation and meaning of protest in Kenya? Through this question, I sought to explore through selected testimonies and archival data, what makes people participate in the protest in Kenya, and what such protests means to different people in the country. Observing that changes have occurred in the way the protest events are enacted, from violent to peaceful and 'decent', I also explored the possible explanations of such changes within the context of rationality, dramatization and personalization of the politics of contention. From this, I suggest that a personalized rationality of the emerging and shifting State class dominates and manipulates the nature and construct of the protest movement in Kenya as it controls and negotiates within itself, the control of the State structures for the accumulation, mobilization and distribution of socio-economic resources and socio-political reproduction.

This study is premised on the hypothesis that the Kenyan political elite have adopted and appropriated the protest movement as a way of contesting for power to control the State machinery. Thus though the reform protest movement was based on demands for comprehensive constitutional reforms and institutionalization of democracy and accountable

governance, the subsequent protest events have deviated from that goal. Instead, they have become ways of conducting politics; a form of negotiating for power within themselves. Dramatization provides an aesthetic front and transformation into dramatic performances rife with contradictions and self-validating narratives. To this end, I examine the Kenyan protests as events situated in the political context of the country using the Resource Mobilization Theory perspective. In other words, I assume that protest events are logical and planned towards a particular goal. Yet in the Kenyan case, the goals originally set out for have been abandoned for what appears to be opportunistic personal/ group ends. How do such shifts play themselves out within and across the dominant groups in the protest movements in Kenya?

1.2 Background to the Study: Historical context of protest in Kenya

After the 1982 failed coup attempt in Kenya, Moi government became progressively repressive. The country was transformed into single party State through a series of Constitutional amendments and legislations which made the government indistinguishable from the ruling Party. The dominance of the ruling Party machinery in different guises and levels combined with the lack of separation between political space and the State, systematically suffocated expression and basic freedoms. The police, and other organized service provision agencies of the State became part of an extensive network of State espionage and suppression.

Followed with the 1988 massive rigging of the General Elections, dissidence and protest became inevitable in the country. Where dissidence was manifested, it was suppressed through force directed at the dissenters, their families and friends in ways meant to isolate, intimidate, incriminate and incarcerate. Detentions and disappearances became the order of

the day as alternative views were labelled subversive, anti-government and anti-peace-loving; effectively anti-Kenyan. In all, legitimate popular grievances and disaffection with the existing social, economic and political order became pretexts by the politicians in power to consolidate power by any means available including criminal terror and torture (Chabal and Daloz, 1999: 84)

Different constitutional amendments were made in the country which strategically served both power dynamics within the ruling Party and the country at large. For instance party discipline problems were dealt with as threats to the nation and the Constitution (Munene, 2001:12-20); while a more powerful Executive with administrative tentacles across the country was seen as panacea for possible challenges to government and national stability (Otieno, 2005). In itself, the State became no more than 'a décor. ... a façade masking the realities of deeply personalized political relations and networks' (Chabal and Daloz, 1999:16)

Different forms of covert resistance emerged and were quickly and brutally snuffed out by the government, with activists arrested, tortured and jailed between 1986 and 1987 on the basis on trumped up charges ranging from sedition to malicious assault on government functionaries (See different editions of local newspapers and magazines especially the Weekly Review). Kenya's academics and other intelligentsia transformed the universities and colleges into grounds for clandestine movement's intent on introducing political reforms, especially constitutional multiparty democracy. Inevitably this motivated the formation of clandestine movements and networks of subversive action such as the December 12th Movement¹ and setting up of underground media through leaflets, newsletters and rumour-mills that spread

¹ December, 12th was named after the day Kenya gained independence, which apparently was betrayed on the same day.

subversive literature, mostly in the urban such as Pambana ("Struggle" - for the December 12th Movement), and Mpatanishi ("Reconciliator" - for the Mwakenya).

The common trait among all these clandestine efforts was the overt attempt to stage and position themselves as articulating the people's position and thus lay claim to legitimacy as opposed to the oppressive Moi regime. They aligned themselves in performative manner (though they could dare not come out publicly) with the private tribulations of individual citizens in the hands of the government; a collective tragedy and challenge only redeemable through collective action. They incorporated literary camouflage as well as theatrical techniques such as comedy, irony and symbolism to circumvent the confines of politically correct space and discourse and thus craft a public space within which an alternative public could be imagined.

As the wind of change swept across the globe with the end of the Cold War, the Moi/KANU regime became increasingly criticized and opposed both locally and internationally. Pressure was increasingly applied: aid and development partnerships being suspended or withheld by Western countries and agencies pending compliance with economic and political reforms. The demand for multiparty politics was used to galvanize the people and mobilize for mass action- a reference to public mass protests. Finally Moi and the ruling Party KANU, gave in to the demands after violent and wide-spread protests; and in December 1991; multiparty politics was restored.

With the official advent of multiparty politics, the 90s witnessed a myriad of public protests such as the public stripping of old women in March 1992 demanding for the release of political prisoners; and the 1997 'No Reforms No Elections' mass actions demonstrations which culminated in the Inter-Parliamentary Parties Group deals which agreed on minimum

pre-election reform package. Moi won both the 1992 and 1997 due to among other factors, a fragmented Opposition. Subsequently, the drive for a new constitutional dispensation became intricately intertwined with the removal of Moi as President who according to the 1992 reforms could only serve for no more than two presidential terms.

From 1997 to 2002, reforms and political activism seemed targeted at ensuring that Moi did not change the Constitution to allow him run for a third term or manipulate the political field to ensure that his appointee won the 2002 elections. Seemingly that after 1997, the constitutional reform process became personalized on both sides of the divide: it was seen as targeting Moi but also as a tool for specific Opposition politicians to get to power. This effectively circumvented the initial vision and drive for institutionalization of democracy. Once the space was open for overt discourse and challenging against the government, the whole process turned into a personalized series of acts and performances aimed at capturing political power and the State edifice intact.

The Opposition in the 2002, the elections promised to institutionalize democracy and systems of accountable governance through enacting of the draft Constitution within 100 days of their forming government. For this promise, Kenyans elected the Opposition, National Alliance Rainbow Coalition (NARC) in a landslide victory. However, once in fully in power, NARC changed: nobody among those who had inherited the awesome powers under the old Constitution wanted the new Constitution as it had been drafted². The ruling elite supported a government system with a powerful president arguing that devolution of power were a recipe chaos, just as Moi had argued. They wanted the all-powerful Presidential

² The contention has always been between supporters of Parliamentary versus Presidential systems. The former proposed devolved power structure with Parliament as Supreme organ to check the Executive while the latter favoured a powerful Presidency. President Kibaki and his inner circle favoured their excessive powers while the Opposition now made of part of his cabinet outside his ethnic community favoured a devolved power system.

system which controlled all resources, finances and all sectors of the country's economy. The Opposition wanted power and resources devolved to more accountable and controllable levels since historically the central government had been biased and unequal in favour of the ruling elite.

Finally the Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK) organized and announced a national referendum as stipulated in the Constitutional Review Act in the event of a nationwide lack of consensus over the draft Constitution. The government side lost. Kenya is using the old constitution which was the cause of the reform movement. People are no longer protesting about it. The leadership of the reform movement is now in power and has shifted its focus to more 'development issues' rather than the 'politics of reforms' as they now put it. Protest events whenever they are held now they are targeted at particular leaders or factions rather than the issue of institutionalizing democracy. They are more dramatic, less confrontational and organized in ways which are less disruptive.

In short, there has been a 'de-scale shift' since 1990 which in the present, especially post-2000, is characterised by committed political entrepreneurship connecting and more often claiming resonance with a fickle and ethnically compromised public. My main aim is to explore this continuous circumvention of change by the political elite through the very processes which appear to be driving it. I also draw attention to the major impediment to reforms and changes Kenya: the personality cults. I manage to show how protesting has changed over the years and how this is related to the changes in the individualization of the practise of politics in the land.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW: CONCEPTUALIZING KENYAN PROTEST

2.1 Introduction to the Literature Review

In this section, I discuss how the Kenya protest movement can be conceptualized to fit into the models of the resource mobilization while critiquing the inadequacies of the RMT to fully interpret them. I give a brief overview of the location of the RMT in the analysis of social movements and proceed to show the nature and form of contention under study with regard to the Kenya protest scene. The argument I build here is that Kenyan protest reveal characteristics of social movements but defy the institutional logic, relationality, and organizational goal-oriented rationality which is at the core of the RMT. I point out that though the RMT acknowledges the significance of context and the relational nature of protest, it can not anticipate the highly dramatized aspects of Kenyan political contention. I posit that contextual differences exist between the Kenyan and 'European/ American' contexts within which the RMT find high applicability and must be accounted for in order to effectively explain forms and trajectories of contention in 'non-core contexts' such as Kenya. In particular I highlight two such differentiating aspects:

- a. The dominance of the State as the mechanism and structure for resource mobilization, accumulation and distribution (and absence of local capital bases to balance this);
- b. Strong linkage between exclusive control of State–structure, power and social reproduction and resource accumulation

In such circumstances, the political elite through dramatization and aestheticization, transform protest movement into a tool for their contests over the State, and systematically divert the intentions into and through personalization of the repertoires of protest. Consequently, actors in political contention focus their struggle on controlling

and dominating of the State as a means for accumulation rather than transforming the institutions of governance and power. Thus, contention is often personal survival contest among personalities and factions within the state-class. This explains the shifts to dramatic personalization of protest in Kenya from the initially sought institutionalizing claims and claim-making systems. Ultimately, I propose that in studying protest movements in such contexts, the RMT need to conceptually incorporate the state-class paradigms as suggested and demonstrated by Friedman (2003).

2.2 Collective Action, Resource Mobilization and Dramaturgy

Protest has been conceived in varying but essentially converging ways: as forms 'disruptive action carried out by diverse social actors with the purpose of making public their disagreement with or dissension from rules, institutions, policies, powers, authorities and/or social and political conditions' (Lopez-Maya, 2002:200; see also Tarrow, 1991:11). They form repertoire - 'discontinuous contentious collective action....directly and visibly and significantly affecting people's realization of interests (Tilly, 1986:3)' characterising a given society within given time and space. Nam (2006) defines protest as any acts of defiance challenging the political or economic regime; [and I dare add the socio-cultural regime too.]. For the Kenya case, I am inclined towards the Tarrow (1991) conception of protest as acts of dissent manifested through public acts (which are often unconventional) with the intention of engineering and creating change, especially political. Due to the long period during which these acts have been taking place since 1990 and the involved claims and claim-making strategies, I feel that they are a protest movement. I am also more interested in examining the workings – the performance and 'publicness' of the Kenyan protest movement rather than its genesis and emergence.

Engaging in the debate regarding how protest actions come into being and how mobilizations occurs as the two dominant branches of social movement theories do, is not the focus of this study. Instead, I attempt to examine the Kenyan protest movement as process of contentious politics as conceived by McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001) through the Resource Mobilization Theory lens. In a way then, it is an attempt to apply the RMT in non-American and by extension non-European contexts to illustrate the significance, of not only spatial and time differences, but also the performative cultures of place on social (protest) movements. In the literature review and the rest of the study, I conceptually explore and discuss Kenyan political contention by concurrent application and evaluation of the RMT; identify aspects of Kenyan protest events and repertoires which defy the RMT and suggest explanations for that. Subsequently, I propose a more encompassing paradigm which incorporates the state-class formation and dramaturgical perspectives to contention.

I find that Kenyan protest movements actors expect and invest more than the input -output pertinent aspects identified by resource mobilization paradigms to the extent that the performance of protest has become an end in itself, deviating from the ideally intended and often declared aim of structural change into a self-validating spectacles. This in many ways responds to arising political possibilities connected with the developments and participation in the protest movement in the country since 1990.

I posit that the shift to personalize rather than institutionalize claims, struggles and demands for change, is due to the tendency of Kenyan politics and contention being a zero-sum-winner-takes-all interaction; and the location of the State as the dominant (in fact sole) accumulation machine which must be possessed, controlled and dominated for individuals, groups or classes to survive, prosper or reproduce. Subsequently change is viewed in exclusionary terms: it targets the capture of the State by different factions of the political

class at the expense of the others. This makes it emotive and performative as each side attempts to camouflage its agenda through ritualization of the protest process rather than institutionalization of the process into a movement. These rituals serve as means of superficially 'dramatizing injustice, discharging distressing emotions, generating emotional energy, building solidarity and affirming identity' (Taylor and Whittier, 1995:177-78). Within the protesting publics they create sense of pride, evoke anger and honour in appropriate measure to ensure not only numerical mobilization but also emotional and commitment mobilization. Essentially evocations are means mobilizing for protest events; but in Kenya they become the end of protest events. 'People protest to feel protest' as one university student leader put. Thus, protest in Kenya is defined by this personalized dramaturgical self-validation.

2.3 Resource Mobilization Theory and Public Protest Movements

Public protest (and other social movement) actions have been viewed through two dominant perspectives: collective (mob) behaviour and rational choice. As collective behaviour it is seen to be motivated by grievances and influenced by collective behaviour by theorists like Le Bon (1896) and Blummer, (1924) with the contagion theory; Allport (1924) with the convergence theory, and, Turner (1964) and Smelser (1962) with the emergent norm theory. Basically, these theories view collective acts as motivated by deprivation, alienation and psycho-social dislocation of individuals. These theories explain collective behaviour on the basis of some processes whereby moods, attitudes and behaviour are communicated rapidly and uncritically accepted to attract and arouse emotions in contagious, converging and norm creating ways. As such mobilization of collective action is directed at creating an uncritical, irrational, deviant mob.

In general, these theories focus on the psychological profile of participants and assumed psychological dividends of participation. Ultimately they fail to establish the connection between those characteristics and mobilizations at different times and places such as the large scale protest movements that occurred in the 1960s (Wolfson, 2001). The conception of social movements as collective mob actions manifesting psycho-social degeneracy has been viewed as conservative and anti-change. For example in the Kenyan case, the State employed the discourses and imagery of deviance and degeneracy to confront the reform activists. They were portrayed as drug addicts, criminals and social malcontents bent on destruction and causing chaos. Because of the tendency to be appropriated by the State and those in power to muzzle and crush opposition movements, collective behaviour theories often carry negative connotations.

Alternatively, as acts of rational choice, protest is explained from the individual level where 'rational individuals make calculated responses based on assessment of the costs and benefits of defiance,' more so when 'actors get selective rewards for participation in anti-status-quo movements and non-participants get penalized (Eckstein, 1989:4). Rational choice paradigms fail to account for the emergence of commitment and solidarities; their context and location within the dynamics of the individual-collective actions involved- 'the patterned *range of ways* individuals and groups respond to conditions they consider unsatisfactory and the *range of outcomes* of defiant acts' depend on more than individual rationality and attributes.

Inherent in the identified inadequacies of both strands of theory are the two questions that have come to occupy emerging theorizing of social movements: how do the social movements emerge and how do social movement actors mobilize? In many ways, the preoccupations with these two have come to define the two major theoretical perspectives in the study of social movements: the New Social Movements theories and the Resource

Mobilization theories. The former is European and tends to question 'reductionism Marxism which assigned the working class a privileged place in the unfolding of history'; while the latter is more north American and tends to criticize 'Durkheim's view of collective action as anomic and irrational behaviour resulting from rapid social change' on one hand and the 'relative deprivation' theory which assumes a direct link between perceived deprivation and collective action.' (Canel, 2004: 1).

Preparedness to participate in protests has a distinct dynamic that varies systematically over time and place. For example they follow 'a distinct economy of protest where people are less likely to protest in economic good times' as Sanders, Clarke, Stewart and Whiteley (2003: 687) suggest based on their study of protest dynamics in Britain; although Tarrow (1989) refutes this coincidence of protest cycles with economic cycles. Frank and Fuentes (1990) quoted in Wolfson (2001) point out that the connection between economic and protest cycles still remains subject to investigation. Suffice it to highlight that all these arguments imply the existence of a high degree of rationality, opportunism and strategy in the making and mobilization of/for protest movements.

Jenkins (1983) points out that unlike the New Social Movements theory which diverts attention away from the problems of mobilization, organization and strategic decision-making, Resource Mobilization Theory addresses the need to show the 'continuities between movement and institutional actions, the rationality of movement actors, the strategic problems confronted by movements and the role of movements as agencies for social change' (p. 528). He further identifies what resource mobilization analysts have agreed define successful social movements:

- a. Rationality and adaptability of actions to rewards and costs
- b. Institutionalized power- relations conflicts

- c. Ubiquitous conflict generated grievances to necessitate formations and mobilization of movements dependent on organizational capacity, and availability of resource and opportunities for collective action;
- d. Centralized and formally rather than decentralized and informally structured;
- e. Are enmeshed in and determined by strategic factors and political processes.

(Jenkins, 1983: 528).

With emphasis on organization and leadership, the above outlines the spirit of a theory which assumes that successful movements must acquire resources and create strategic exchange relationships with other groups as they achieve their goal (Foweraker, p. 15-17). Tarrow (1991) elucidates further by pointing out that critical to social movements are questions concerned with the *how, the who and the why* of engagement (emphasis added). For him though the movements could be radically inspired, they 'display political strategism: the themes, forms of action and the strategies ...' are logical and institution –targeting... for organizers, the demonstration of prowess and dedication to ensure victory are part of the motivations (p. 3-7). He stretches this point further by pointing out that the power of collective actions itself plays a special role: it becomes 'almost the only resource available to gain attention, rally a following and insert themselves politically' (p. 7).

This proceeds from the assumptions that grievances and deprivations and therefore social discontent are universal while collective actions on the other hand are located in time and space, experience deficits of resources for mobilization, maintenance and expansion (Foweraker, 1995). Meyer and Tarrow (1998) agree with this by defining movements as '*collective challenges to existing arrangements of power and distribution by people with common purposes and solidarity, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities*' (p.4). This means that social movements and other forms of contention are never removed from institutions but are in constant resonance with and or reference to institutional actors in 'sustained, conflictual

interaction' with these actors and institutions. In examining the Kenyan protest movement then, the underlying quest is to find out how these sustained and conflictual interactions have been 'happening' in Kenya; and how the actual process of 'happening' relates to the mobilization dynamics of the protest movement in Kenya generally and in the operations of the emerging state class specifically.

The study then problematizes the 'happening' of these sustained and conflictual interactions as the processes of contention made up of diverse actors joining together 'forces at a specific moment in history as a result of specific conjectural circumstances' (Kriesi, 1988, in Tarrow, 1991:14). To that end, the study provides insights into the way different actors, in time and place, join the happening of protest in Kenya and how they contribute to the happening. I conceptualize these 'happenings' as repertoires 'a limited set of routines that are learned, shared, and acted out through a relatively process of choice.....they emerge from struggle....innovative ways in which actors make and receive claims (Traugott, 1995:26-29).

The repertoires of contention (the happenings/ acts of protest) have a dual nature: they are resources and outcomes of invested resources. Significant to the study is what happens when the 'resource' of collective action (in this public protest) becomes an object of struggle in itself and is appropriated for ends other than the envisioned transformations of the political structures; and if so, what happens to the movement as a whole. For instance the drive for protest action (mass action) in Kenya seems to have become an end in itself: 'people protesting so that they can protest in ways which make their protest more protesting.' This becomes more pertinent in view of McCarthy and Zald (1973:13) assertion that grievances can be either given or manufactured and 'expanded to meet the funds and support personnel available' by entrepreneurs spurred by deficiency or abundance of resources, structures and opportunities for collective mobilization. McCarthy and Zald (1973) further point out that

such entrepreneurs often emerge by seizing cleavages and redefining long-standing grievances especially among deprived and disorganized collectivities (Jenkins, 198). Frey, Dietz and Kalof (1992) do not answer this question too. They add another dimension to this: that displacement and group factionalism are major predictors of protest movement success; a process involving the creation, transformation and extinction of actors, identities and forms of action during contention which ultimately alter the transgressive and routine politics of contention (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001:62).

Crozat (1995) in a study of institutionalized protests, investigated whether the efficacy of, and public responses to, protest forms varies with time, and, whether repeated protest repertoires potentially 'desensitized society to various forms of protest' (p.60). He found that the popularity and efficacy of the forms of protest has 'not changed considerably' though the 'pool of potential protesters is not increasing either (p.81). He concludes that though institutionalized, they were not accepted since 'what makes protests effective is this ability to disrupt, the lack of acceptance' [institutional]. In view of this, the protest movement in Kenya has been undergoing entrepreneurial individualization in ways that have affected its efficacy in contention with the State. This could explain the incorporation of intensive dramatization of its repertoires. Dramatization becomes a way of maintaining visibility, relevance and the capital to engage as a collective to compensate for the dissipating traditional confrontation.

The study reviews the trajectory of protest action in Kenya from violent mass action confrontation with the government (police) in the 1990s to the present 'permitted' protest with security provided by the government (police). As one respondent put it, 'a shift from

confrontation of force to contention over flowers³ has become evident in the protest business'. Protests are becoming organized and carried out according to schedule: "time place and manner of protest ... becoming more orderly and routinized' (McCarthy and McPhail, 1995: 108-109). The study is inevitably here concerned with the implications of these changes on the process and product of claim making in Kenya. What emerges is the increased performativity of protest – increasing dramaturgy rather than confrontation closely linked with the personalization of the country's political contention practises.

Public protests are essentially performances of contention which 'call attention to the inherent dialectical tensions between passion and organization; the management of which is key to the survival of movement organization (Benford and Hunt, 1992:42). However this is an interactive process with continuous adjustment within and between protestors and their antagonist(s) (McAdam, 1983) since both sides realize what it really is: a 'demonstration and enactment of power... concretizes ideas regarding the struggle [between them] and reveals the way out to desired power relations... oscillating from subject to agent of the change' (Benford and Hunt, 1992: 50). Though it acknowledges the significance of performance, the resource mobilization theory tends to overlook the performative dynamics - the dramaturgy – 'the intense emotions, dramatic tensions and heightened sense of expectancy' which animate protest movements.

Godwin, Jasper and Polletta (2001) explain that emotion is culturally and socially constructed with situated rules of expression, management and evaluation. The socio-cultural location shapes and defines their meaning and functionality. Protestors then 'weave moral, cognitive and emotional packages of attitudes through framing of contention as desirable or detestable

³ The joke about protest over flowers refers to the most recent public demonstration opposition Members of Parliament over a Party symbol which had been allocated to rival party alleged to be government friendly.

...always with someone to blame....magnifying the opponent's power to be confronted with concurrent enhancement of the protestors outrage and sense of threat...thus transforming the emotional 'scape' so created into a cognitive belief'(p. 16-17). These rules can be subverted and have been subverted in the Kenyan case. Using Godwin, Jasper and Polleta (2001) distinction between reciprocal and shared emotions in protest, one discerns an emphasis on sustained emotional reinforcing of the protest acts in Kenya which though objectifying the antagonist, are more concerned with the appearances and pleasures of protesting together and little focus on the cognitive beliefs such as institutionalized changes in the country.

I hasten to explain though that emotional dynamics are central to successful protest. They help in creating a 'conscience constituency'- a scape of 'feelings of solidarity and morality which arise in group members' mutual awareness of the shared focus of attention'... they energize the process of formulating new ideas that shape the opposition to the status quo...'(Randall, 2001:29-37). They help to broadcast the ritualization of claim-making. What I find worthy examining in detail in the Kenya case is the way this ritualization seems 'stagnated at itself' – unable to create and nurture that conscience constituency strong enough to be institutionalized rather than be personalized.

Protest as any other action is ideally and conceptually relational, 'always establishing relationships with inherent tendency to force open all limitations and cut across boundaries' (Arendt, 1958). Relevant actors develop relations with the emerging identities, and actions within changing contexts and structures of power in such contexts (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001:61-62). How can the apparent disintegration of the Kenyan protest movement be explained vis a vis its shifts in dramaturgy? Is the dramaturgy –from the intensive use of violent confrontation in the 90s to the extensive aesthecization of the post 2000 period- a

product of the protest movement or an effect on the protest movement? How does it tally with the relational shifts among the key political actors involved in the protest movement? Could the answer be in the rational choice theory and its resource mobilization counterpart since they posit that 'dissidents look for more effective but less costly ways to have their voices heard; and people want to utilize their limited resources in order to improve their productivity'(Nam, 2006:103-104)?.

This study aimed at examining the Kenyan protest movement in an attempt to find out the efficacy of resource mobilization approach to understanding movements in non-American and non-European contexts. To a large extent it is appropriate. However the ritualization of protest through dramatic performances in Kenya adds a different dimension which exposes the inadequacy of the resource mobilization school: protest can acquire a life of their own as performative acts which are ends in themselves. This nurtures a culture of protest essentialized and divorced from the initial mission: change, but adapted to entrepreneurial politics where the national political elites are engaged in deal-cutting and power contests.

Protest in Kenya seems to have become an everyday act of resistance. However, the object of resistance and sustained focus of the protest movement on the core of this object is what motivates this study. Benford (1992) has proposed that movements are drama concerned with challenging or sustaining interpretations of power relations, with each side competing to appropriate the techniques of protest to affect the audience in subjective ways. Ultimately as Meyer and Tarrow (1998) confirm, there is a tendency towards standardization and routinization of the repertoires of contention which robs the protest its spontaneity and inclusivity for popular mobilization. Given that resistance and contention is often also a matter of (re-)signification, underpinned by 'democratic contestation' within an unstable political performative (Butler, 1997); how has the protest movement in Kenya related to its

focus? What are the implications of the different performative political events on the trajectory of the protest movement in the country? What are the resource mobilization-related implications of the performances?

2.4 Possible Alternative Paradigmatic Avenue?

Through these and other questions raised throughout the discussion, the study suggests a dialectical connection between the performance of protest in Kenya, the politics and the objectives of protest movements' leadership in the country. As the political space opened up, giving more freedoms, the protest movement is gradually inserting itself into the national daily lives as a major form of doing politics and carving out the national space. Modes and forms of protest have become more routinized, civilized and less violent while the State – through the police have become friendlier to protest. However, this has undermined the efficacy of protest as an agency for change while increasing its entertainment appeal. Ultimately protest has become synonymous to political campaigning for voters.

These acts, dramas and shifts reveal the transformation of the protest movement into a performative strategy for doing politics among the political elite- in ways that fit the tactical response to popular challenges on the structures of power. Friedman (2003) rightly points out that the political sphere in African countries such as Kenya are dominated by a ruling elite that controls all the resources through the State structures. The State class 'depends on multiple monopolies which coagulate around the State structure, without any separation between political and economic power... controlling resources as private enterprises; and incorporate the masses as sources of social and political reproduction and legitimating (p. 349-357). The political elite in Kenya then can be said to be engaged in strategic courting and controlling of popular protest events as a guarantee for maintaining, replacing and

reproducing themselves. This is the basis of my exploration of the possibilities of the RMT in reading protest movements.

I posit that its weakness lies in its silent address to the performative ways the state class adopts protest in particular contexts such as Kenya where the State represents everything hence their fear to demolish or transform it. This evidently motivates strategic circumvention of the goals of contention through protest. Thus this study I explore protest as a form of political contention in Kenya through the lens of the Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT). I show that public protest in Kenya is a rational, goal-oriented action as the RMT anticipates; but also, highly dramatized and personalized. I read performance of public protest as a form of recruitment into the Kenyan political class following on Tilly and Goodin (2006:15) reformulated the protest movements as a combination of processes, and episodes which lead to enlargement of identities through mechanisms of brokerage and social appropriation'. Protest in this sense has become adopted and socially appropriated by political brokers to divert genuine struggles for transformation, instead being employed in the state class contests for control of the state structures amongst themselves thus subverting the ideal goals of protest social movement.

Subsequently, I point out the inadequacy of RMT in explaining the Kenyan protest movement where power is controlled by the state made of 'a myriad of quarrelling gangs [of politicians] constantly engaged in stealing from each other (Friedman, 2003:31) representing none but itself as a political elite. The inadequacy of the RMT is due to its failure to anticipate this contextual manipulative insertion of dramatization and personalization into the repertoires of protest, and propose that RMT needs analytic combination with state-class theory (SCT). Such an approach will appreciate the strengths of resource mobilization- the rationality and goal-orientation of protest actors; the character of State classes' relations of

contention in contexts where the State is the ultimate vehicle for personal accumulation and social reproduction, and the particular forms of protest events' happenings. I further point out that the RTM needs testing in non-European/ core political contexts such as Kenya where the State is manifestly a dominant dominion of the ruling elite while the popular sector is for the masses largely surviving on the fringes unless when expediently recruited for legitimating of sectoral claims.

Subsequently, I point out the inadequacy of RMT in explaining the Kenyan protest movement as it does not anticipate this contextual manipulative insertion of dramatized personalization into the repertoires of protest, and propose that RMT needs contextualization into the Kenyan form of politics and claim-making through use of state-class theory (SCT). Such an approach will appreciate the strengths of resource mobilization- the rationality and goal-orientation of protest actors; the character of State classes' relations of contention in contexts where the State is the ultimate vehicle for personal accumulation and social reproduction, and the particular forms of protest events' happenings. I further point out that the RTM needs testing in non-European/ core political contexts such as Kenya where the State is manifestly a dominant dominion of the ruling elite while the popular sector is for the masses largely surviving on the fringes unless when expediently recruited for legitimating of sectoral claims.

3.0 METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

In choosing the methodology for the study, I opted for an exploratory –explanatory perspective, appreciating ‘the prominent place of explanatory stories in the social life ‘of events, places and actors (Tilly and Goodin, 2006). I read the protest movement in Kenya as narratives which seek to apportion blame and/or blessing in a relational manner; ‘their dramatic structures that separates protest actions from ordinary everyday life. Because the argument framing the study revolves around the contextual and relational aspects of the RMT, I sought to identify, describe and explain in an exploratory manner the shifts in the protest movements in Kenya.

I explore the protests as a series of events with concurrent analysis in which the actors interpret their contexts and select the appropriate repertoire of actions to perform for particular goals. I trace and discuss the developments of protest as claim-making in Kenya while also reviewing them as located performances of everyday life in Kenya. I describe briefly selected protest events for illustration, their located contexts as well as sketches of the key actors and spaces of contention during the protests. I also focus on the protests as events because of three reasons which inform the objective of the study: seek to understand and explain them, I already have the advantage of hindsight having witnessed the outcomes and progress of the protests I examine, and... ‘the capacity to discern how the experiences of different individuals in the past are related to one another and how a profusion of discrete events widely distributed in space (as well as over time) interconnected to form event strictures of broader compass’ (Çohen, 1997:. 291).

I study them as events taking cue from Bauman (1986)'s view of events as products 'of the systematic interplay of numerous situational factors, prominent among them: participants' identities and roles; the expressive means employed in performance; social interactional ground rules, norms and strategies of performance and criteria for interpretation and evaluation and the sequence of acts that make up the scenario event' (p. 3-4). I ethnographically study the protests in Kenya as situated contention events, in which structures and conventions combine during their performances for a stated but sometimes spontaneous objective. I therefore treat protest as both verbal and routinized forms of dissent which have manifested themselves over time in Kenya. The idea here is to get a descriptive picture of public protest as a form of articulation, but also analyze their dialectical relationship between the protests and the politics of the country (see Rutch, Koopmans and Neidhardt, 1998).

The study of protest performance in Kenya has no precedent hence my data gathering was difficult and hazardous since respondents and data sources were suspicious and reluctant to divulge information. Further, the aspect of performance being the focus tended to make the respondent feel devalued or see the discussions as slanted to portray them as 'actors' and not serious reformers. Yet this is the whole point of the study are they or are they not? The memory of State surveillance and informers also made my work more difficult. There is an emerging culture of protest staging in Kenya hence the tendency for interviewees to be either cynical or creative in their answers, hence the reason why most of my data comes from past and reported descriptions of protest acts in the country. Furthermore, this is a little more than an exploratory study hence limiting the generalizability of the findings.

-----Chapter four: -----

4.0 TRACING AND EXPLAINING THE KENYAN PROTEST

4.1 Introduction to the Discussion of the Findings

Under the rubric of the general goal of finding out how protesters go about the process of doing protest given their 'rationality and selfish calculations' and the 'limited resources available which they must mobilize', I specifically sought to explore how they organize and utilize the available resources to intrude into, and 'disrupt other people's lives' in the 'grandeur' of their popular 'power' and cause. I examine the ways and strategies they employed to enter their sites⁴; the relations between themselves and their subjects (the general citizenry), and the 'enemy' (in this case the government) of their protests; and identify common resources they appropriate during protest and the main challenges that confront them in the battlefield and the course of performing the protest.

I conceive protest as an interactive event within an embodied space (the protest event) within which dialectical acts of 'Self' (protester) and 'Other' (antagonist or the targeted sympathiser) (re)construction are enacted with accompanying power dynamics, hegemonies and significations. The question to examine then is how this interaction is subversive and oriented to fit into the politics of the moment, especially the reform agenda in Kenya. The other question under examination also is connected with the ways in which the different actors perceive their actions, project themselves and utilize whatever opportunity available to further the cause. In particular, I use the testimonies of my informants to explore the connection between protest performance and the dynamics of the protest events in the context of Kenyan politics.

⁴ Site is here used to refer to the protests particular world which is spatially and time constructed, located and embodied in ways which are socially 'particular, empirically real, historically relational and dated' (Bourdieu, 1998: 2).

From the data gathered and the analyses conducted, I propose that a Kenyan protest is an act of confrontations and contentions over power and means of appropriating that power in ways which have the potential to take their own dynamic, organized around prominent individuals. Inevitably, protest has become a continuous and dynamic cycle of positionality and discourse making, all dictated by the organizers' imaginations and motivations but also the on-site dramaturgy of protest events. In the former, protest participants (as opposed to organizers) become more like props in a script whose plot they have no control; pawns in a bigger national chess board or 'fodder for the revolution'; while in the latter they become actors in a live performance where they are both the structure and agency of transforming and signifying of acts. Through testimonies of protest participants and other data sources, I aim to capture these apparent contradictions and tease out their implications on the forms, content and eventual character of protest in Kenya.

The contradictions seem to be part of the protest events right from the conceptualization and planning, and hardly stops even after the protesters have left the scene. The discourse generated by the media, the memorization of the protest events and the ways in which they get appropriated are constantly negotiating these internal dualisms. The way post-protest event analyses and discourses are generated and disseminated unto narratives and histories make the process of contention a multi-levelled movement between the real and symbolic, the actual and represented.

4.2 Preparing for Protest: Motivation and Coming into Being of Subversive Acts in Kenya

During the course of this study, I realized that the process of becoming subversive and engaging in protest is not so different from the process of doing ethnography. To do either one needs to be motivated, prepared both conceptually and materially. The reasons most

protest participants got involved ranged from masochistic to pragmatic; from patriotic to selfishly entrepreneurial. The informants for this study too expressed personal sentiments towards their participation in the protest events. Take the case of James an employee of a leading Community Based Organization that has been in the forefront for civic education in the Nairobi slums:

I joined the protest events during my days in campus because I hate oppression.

When you come from poor backgrounds like I do, you learn to hate any form of authoritarianism; you become daring to the point of self-immolation.

Any way out, any way that promises a possibility of making the world better and freer is an opportunity you can't miss.

For James, participation in protest events in many ways seems a continuation of his lifelong struggle- notice his insertion of a personal history into his explanation- against experienced inequalities and deprivations. To protest is a way of making a claim for what he feels is a fair share denied by the system spurred on by idealism: to make the world better and freer. With the benefit of hindsight, James remarks:

But after sometime you realize it is not enough to protest in the streets.

Change requires more than that. You need to be in a position where people listen to you. People listen to you when you have the authority when you look that you know what you are saying and show that whatever you are saying is worth their time and effort.

The change in James can be felt from his tone. I could sense the cynicism in him as we talked. As a protestor he had come to realize the rift between idealism and realities of socio-economic existence in Kenya. Protest is now closely associated with status and appearance; people are less inclined to mobilize on the basis of ideas, issues and grievances but rather on the basis of who is part of that protest. This revealed another motivational factor for the protest events in Kenya: personality cults and following.

The above discovery coming from James' testimony found lots of corroboration in the archival data I gathered. In 1990, during the violent clamour for multiparty politics, demonstrations were organized around and by key political personalities. Most protestors interviewed by the media rarely mentioned the grievances they were protesting about, basically the constitutional reforms. Instead most of them sought to be identified as fighting for, with or against particular political personalities or groups. The extent to which the fight for these personalities symbolized the struggle for institutional reforms can not be taken for granted. However it reveals little inclinations towards institutions (or institutionalization) as basis for claiming and claim-making among the Kenya protest movement. For instance, in the Sunday Nation of July 8th, 1990 it was reported thus:

A group of shabbily dressed youngsters carrying stones triggered the thin atmosphere as they shouted 'Matiba atolewe!' (Release Matiba!). [Thereafter] the procession started chanting ... others kept shouting: Matiba wapi?' (Where is Matiba?)

Note the media description of the protestors-shabbily dressed youngsters-. This deliberately highlights the image of the common street protestor in Kenya; the ones James realized could not be taken seriously. To be able to be taken seriously and even noticed, they need signification from a personality, in this case the detained millionaire politician Kenneth Matiba. There protest therefore has to be linked to and judged in view of the Matiba factor.

Most protest participants in Kenya were (and still are) driven to protest events based on who is organizing, participating and when and where they are happening. They become notable events through signification by a prominent personality. For example, I found that protest called during weekends attracted more participants than those called during week days; while those organized in Nairobi's Uhuru Park or Kamkunji had higher chances of succeeding than those in other towns or venues. Peter, a regular participant explained this:

People know in Nairobi all the big guys will attend. It is also possible to be on TV because the media is always there both local and international. As for Uhuru Park or Kamkunji being more popular, it is common sense: these are the places everything begins from.

What in essence Peter is saying is simple: protestors as performers know the significance of space and place. The media has become a critical component of protest events and movement in Kenya that it has to be factored in. The factoring is not only done by the organizers but also the participants. I encountered cases where protestors during a protest march competed with each other over being on camera so that 'people will know they were there', revealing the tendency towards staging for the media. The second point Peter makes is the significance of locations as historical markers and thus embodied spaces for appropriation during protests. The two places where 'everything begins from' are historically symbolic in Kenya. Uhuru Park is the place for freedom while Kamkunji is a Kenyan metaphor for a meeting of patriots. In universities and other institutions people talk of Kamkunji to mean political meeting or gatherings where the systems or perceived system operatives the system or perceived system operatives are publicly given a dress down. Thus the two places are sites of claim signification in the country. Attending an event here has historical implications and one feels as part of the historical making process; a participant, an actor an agent. From this view, the need to court the media dovetails perfectly with the protestors' intentions: not only to be part of history-making but also to be recorded and projected as doing so. To have witnesses.

To this end then protest becomes an event within which there are competing acts of narration and performing- each act seeking to make its mark, each actor with a motive. However, the event eventually comes together as one through this performance seeking and

finding overall significance in its spectacle. How does this then affect the 'antagonist' in this case the State? Two episodes, more than ten years apart can give insights into this question. Obonyo (2005, July 24th, Sunday Nation) evokes the memory of 1990 to illustrate the changes and attitude Kenyans had acquired towards these public protests:

Many still remember vividly the image of [1990] Orengo and Shikuku riding atop a pick-up mounted with speakers daring police to shoot them as they attempted to make their way to Kamkunji grounds cordoned off by heavily armed policemen. ... during the recent riots, some demonstrators waved placards bearing anti-government slogans some even calling on the president to quit. ...

Obonyo then contrasts the new post Moi demonstration:

The lasting image that flashed on newspaper pages and a host of TV stations was that of Morris Otieno of Chemi Chemi ya Ukweli⁵ (a local NGO) standing in the middle of the road, with hands raised in apparent submission to torture for a national cause, the heavily bearded protester braved clouds of teargas and showers of water from police riot trucks fitted with water cannons, as his comrades took to their heels. (p.12).

The protesting 'masses' upon realizing the significance of personalities sometimes attempt to subvert the personal 'idol' of protest by creating and performing the leader role. The contrast between the political heavyweights 'atop a pick-up....with placards' and the lone 'heavily bearded protester', are visually poles apart yet they are both daring and brave. But the second one is made more dramatic, almost comical. The net effect is the diminution of the protest event or scene in the latter while highlighting the significance of the former. These processes of highlighting and foregrounding provide an underlying contextual staging of

⁵ Chemi Chemi ya Ukweli translates from Swahili to mean- the Fount(ain) of Truth. It is a local NGO which works for civic education and human rights through communities among other issues.

contention in which even within the protest camps, internal micro-contests emerge. It is these micro-contests which seem to shift the premium of protest acts as anti-systemic targeting to episodic performances where the more appealing and shocking the more it signifies protest. Ultimately these affect even the motivation and mobilization to protest. Kane, a fourth year student leader at the University of Nairobi in different words emphasizes this point:

The more you participate in these protests the more you get noticed by the leaders- NGOs, politicians and even marketing companies. People want guys who can dare and organize.. Mobilize people for anything. That is why I ensure I attend any of the protests. In any case these days they are basically harmless... you just march, issues statements make speeches and if you are lucky the police are foolish enough to chase you across town. That makes good news you know.

The careerist approach to protest participation captured in Kane's words above is not an isolated case; it actually became a popular view among university students. Many saw the emerging civil society as a potential market for their skills and education and since most of the organizations and agencies working in or through the sector in one way or the other had interests and projects or programmes dealing with community mobilization or civic education and empowerment. Thus most students participated in the protests and other related activists to 'catch the eye' of potential employers and project funders. Protesting then becomes a way of marketing ones skills, abilities and power; mobilizing the self to demonstrate personal ability to mobilizer for a cause. In many ways, protesters become similar to mercenaries for hire rather than committed actors in a movement.

The motif and label of mercenary tendencies towards participation was not limited the students alone. As early as 1990, opposition politicians worked closely with Western governments keen on promoting democracy and good governance. This led to the constant reference to opposition activists and pro-multiparty activists by the government operatives and functionaries as 'stooges of foreign governments, playing to the tunes of their foreign masters'. From available data, the protest movement in Kenya has been closely associated with foreign funded NGOs such as the Ford Foundation and National Endowment for Democracy among other. The USA government and a number of Scandinavian countries worked with and/or through some of these organizations to nurture the struggle for pluralist democracy and human rights.

The 1992 elections saw many of the leading civil society based protest movement leaders win parliamentary seats. Interestingly, it is the election of some of these activists into parliament that saw the subtle shift of the focus of the protest movement from demands for radical institutional directed reforms to personalized struggle against Moi. The constitution became subsidiary with the demand for Moi to leave. In other words, the protest movement became a strategy to get the reigns of power. Subsequent discourse for protest became increasingly about Moi rather than transformation of the political systems.

Though those who remained in the civil society kept the old idealism, it became systematically weakened as the subsequent elections took more and more from its ranks culminating in the 2002 elections which saw almost the entire civil society leadership join parliament while those who were not elected got lucrative government appointments. This effectively derailed the protest movement especially regarding the constitutional reforms since the association of constitutional reforms with Moi made most Kenyans assume that with Moi gone (after 2002) the need for constitutional reforms was unnecessary. Also the fact that almost all the leading protest activists were now in government undermined the

public trust in the neutrality and egalitarian commitment to a new order, instead buttressing the perception that the protest movement was motivated by selfish interest and desire for power and positions in government.

What I inferred from the foregoing leads me to the conclusion that protest acts are often motivated by and amid multiple demands, drives and expectations which are ultimately performed in ways fitting existing political, pragmatic, idealistic and hegemonic permutations. The outcome of such protest events and acts also is neither purely egalitarian and neutral nor an end in itself but aimed at a higher goal: to capture power and secure opportunities for the individual or groups of individuals. Protest becomes located in lived time and embodied spaces within which language and the repertoires of interaction devices are critical and activated in ways to maximize individual opportunity, visibility and possibilities. The subsequent performance of the protest transforms itself into a 'language [that eventually] constitutes the subject... and the possibility of agency' (Butler, 1997:41).

4.3 Performance and Discourses of Protest: Doing Contention in Kenya

The organization of the actual protest event is an intricate affair, a complicated performance. It is the most overt site for contention and claim-making. Both the antagonists and protagonists in the Kenya cases seek to maximize their visibility. From the absurd to the more sophisticated, the motif of performance/drama pervades the Kenyan protest. Consider this case from Nyeri which Kimondo Nderitu, a journalist with the *Daily Nation*, reported the following incident that occurred in the early 90s when the clamour for change was turning more confrontational:

*A street preacher suspected by the locals to be mentally unstable
was picked by security officers while delivering a sermon allegedly
touching on State security outside Othaya market in Nyeri town;*

police told the Sunday Nation (Sunday Nation, 1990, July , 8).

This incident captures the dramatic government response to the complex ways in which demands for change were being disseminated. The paradoxical criminalization of preaching in a country unfettered religious freedom, the metaphor of madness; the subversive openness of market as a place for free exchange of ideas and the ambiguous application of 'State security' all combine to illustrate the way the demand for political reforms was taken up by the contending sides. Herein, the contesting actions and discourses are aptly captured. The State viewed the articulation of the demands in public as acts of madness which nonetheless represented a threat to 'national security'. On the other hand, to the subdued public -as a distinct group of common wananchi⁶- the preacher was a daring bearer of the truth, a prophet 'preaching the truth' which made the State no longer incapable of truth, insecure. Such scenes loaded with meanings and significations took place all over the country: ordinary places and people undergoing/undertaking their daily ordinary activities were transformed into sites of contestation over the political direction and discourse in the country.

Between 1990 and 2005 when the referendum was conducted, different forms of protest acts and performances took place almost everyday in the country. These performances varied in their intensity, stylistics and form. The historical development of these forms is very significant in the analysis since there are evident developments in the presentations of the protest repertoires that are in a way generic and related to the Kenyan politics at the national level. For instance, the increasing emphasis of dramatization and the decrease in violent demonstrations during protest reflect the systematic incorporation of the more radical leaders of the reform movement into the government of the day, or into the mainstream system of government. In many ways it reflects the 'refining of public protests in Kenya to

⁶ A Swahili term borrowed into east African English to general denotes citizens. It translates literary to mean 'owners of the land (nchi) and at times employed as a pejorative term for the holloi polloi, the masses.

make them more aesthetically appealing and civilized'. It also gives insights into the connections between the actual happenings and constructed or interpretative discourses which emerge during protest acts and times. Every act becomes loaded, performed and deliberate rather than routine and/or incidental.

Yet, there are still a way in which the dramatic (or even farcical) reveals the graduated levels of protest (from personal to social; from plain criminal deviance to politically subversive) which they dramatize and how they fit into the individual lives of the participants. The following incidents recorded during some public protest in the 90s illustrate this point:

- a. *Couple of Maasai moran joined looters during one protest event in the city: while others went for monetary valuables, like precious stones and jewelry or household goods, they were spotted breaking into a butcher's shop and carrying away meat. Apparently this seemed to be the most desirable of asset they could identify. (first observed in 1982)*
- b. *Dwellers of Nairobi's slums which have no electricity made away with TV sets only to find themselves stranded with them in their tiny houses. Apparently, in the moment of freedom and abundance, they had forgotten their range of possibilities as they made away with TV sets from the expensive shops in the city (witnessed in 1982 and 1990).*

These acts of appropriating the chaos that characterized some of the violent riots in Nairobi (including the 1982 coup attempt) in different ways reveal a rapture of grievances against the social structure as a whole but also the different micro-level ways people respond when opportunity arises for counter-claiming. While resource mobilization perspective sees the opportunities as inducing a cost-minimizing response, the actual individual agency is

dependent on a socio-cultural performative.⁷ The protestor at that level responds in ways which seek to balance his sense of the heroic and the individualistic opportunist. While the heroic seeks self-redemption from, or subversion of, an unjust order; the opportunistic attempts to 'make hay while the sun shines' during a protest event. The above examples can serve to illustrate this argument. The slum dwellers saw an opportunity for hitting back at the society which kept luxury to/for itself- the TV still remains an object of affluence especially in slums and rural Kenya, in 1982 it was a prestige symbol only for the rich. Their desires for getting a feel of class were presented by the coup and the public chaos of the protest events. The Maasai moran went for meat in a simple basic survival gesture loaded with socio-cultural meaning. Here were people culturally used to eating meat everyday in the manyatta, forced to stay in the city working as cheap watchmen and could not afford meat as they struggle to fit in the fast urbanizing locality in which the system cares little about them.

The next case to consider for illustrative purposes regarding the ways in which protest events are organized as acts and discourse projects, is the protest in 1992 by a group of old women on hunger strike demanding for the release of their sons and kin who were considered political prisoners. At the height of the 1992 countrywide clamour for political reforms in Kenya, a group of about 50 elderly women began a hunger strike at the historic Uhuru (freedom) Park, Nairobi to demand the release of their kin, detained by the Moi government as political prisoners.

Most of them aged over fifty, among them one who twelve years later was to win the Nobel Peace Prize, their strike attracted little local and global attention. As their strike entered the sixth day (3rd March 1992), with growing attention and international condemnation and

⁷ I use this to refer to the way the forces within a context- the cultural interpretation of opportunity, individual vanities and desires within the opportunity space as well as the flow of consent among the actor's immediate peer group/significant other combine to create a performer for the occasion.

publicity, the Moi regime decided to forcibly evict them from Uhuru Park and Nairobi, back to their villages where it was hoped, they could soon be forgotten. Rather than give in or flee from the General Service Unit of the police infamous for their brutality and take no prisoners mentality, in a deliberate act of ultimate defiance, the elderly women begun chanting war dirges as they stripped naked and hurled traditional curses and epithets, as they advanced towards the armed the police (*Daily Nation, East African Standard, Associated Press*, February 29th – March 6th 1992). For a moment, there was tension in the air. The police were surprised as were the crowds that gathered at a distance watched in shock. Of course after recovering from the momentary shock, the police bounced on them, clobbered them senseless and shipped them back to their villages while Wangari Maathai, the future Nobel laureate was hospitalized with serious head injuries. Pictures and images of old wrinkled flabby bodies of women in the media shocked everybody including government supporters.

In a country where old-age is hallowed and public nudity a cultural and moral taboo, the women's protest acquired new and critical significance as part of the national clamour for political reforms and freedoms. Imbued with drama, risk, defiance, deviance and subversion, the act generated a variety of discourses about the protesters and less about their protest aim. People talked about the women who were brutalized, others talked of the dishonour the women had brought upon the country. It became a dual Statement of both symbolic and direct assault on the socio-political edifice of the Moi regime as well as on the protest movement. For some it revealed that the protest movement actors were equally insensitive to civil behaviour than the government thus Moi was justified in using force against them. For others it revealed the government's brutality; transforming the women's individual concerns and demands for the release of their detained kin into a national demand for freedom in both the institutional and public space. It created a convergence zone between the political

excesses of the Moi regime on the national politic and the effects on individuals as specified, and embodied but performative sites of political action and subjection.

The protest event became a complex of small but dramatically loaded and symbolically entrenched acts that made the performances in themselves pursued targets. The choice of the Park where they did the hunger strike, the hunger strike itself as an act of self-denial and the eventual defrocking were all deliberate for (re)presentational effect. How does this fit into the repertoires of protest movement since they were nonetheless not acts of self-immolation?

From the above selection of scenes from the protest events in Kenya, I posit that protests are series and amalgamations of small acts of discontent which coalesce around a collective presentable grievance bringing together differently motivated actors. Subsequently these actors assume the dominant discourse for 'cover' provided by the protest theme. These cover of the protest event is a dialectically constituted and utilized resource which though logically and rationally appropriated by the individual for selfish ends, tends to undermine the meanings and significations of the overall event. For example, the morans and slum dwellers actions as well as the women nudity hardly add any mobilization value to the whole protest. What could be interesting to find out is the possibility of their 'negativity' being a potential 'big stick' which protesters can wield to 'blackmail' their antagonists with.

4.4 Forms and Sites of Protest Performances: From Violence to Decency

The transformation of protest in Kenya into a performance can easily be viewed as accidental from the views of the respondents when the question was put directly to them. However, the reality said a different thing. There had been systematic and almost deliberate shifting of the forms and sites of protest events. In general the trajectory of the protest movement in Kenya reveals particular features of the developments. They show changes in tactics and in attitudes

which even the press has developed towards them: it was more about the showmanship involved rather the issues aimed at. As early as 2002 and 2004 this had become common view. The *Daily Nation* (July 4th 2004) summed the previous day's riots thus: "Our Day of Shame". In contrast, the public demonstrations in 1990 headlines used to read thus: 'Day of Terror'; 'Three Killed in Fresh City riots'; 'City Rioters Burn Buses' etc.

In the 2005 demonstrations, it was reported that police had explicit instructions not to injure anybody but to ensure that no one enter Uhuru Park, the venue for the protest rally. The battle ground was restricted to Uhuru highway, and other city streets where police engaged in comical running hide and seek battles with opposition politicians. In some of these streets, business went on as usual save for the short closures whenever the riotous crowds approached for fear of looting. Interestingly the government never bothered to issues public notices of the illegality of the meetings. Politicians came, marched, issued Statements and left. Most of the time they were accompanied by security men and personal drivers given by the government, and their events covered by the government media.

Before long, demonstration costuming (or uniforms) emerged with the opposition adorning orange colours – symbolically adopted from the Ukraine Orange revolution. The government side on the other hand especially during the referendum campaigns wore bananas and later rose flowers, the socio-cultural insignificance of flowers to the common citizen notwithstanding. In fact, publishing and cloth companies competed for tenders for the supply of protest paraphernalia and costumes: caps, T-shirts, fliers and banners. In a way then, protest has become business with an eye for promotional finesse. Singing and dancing are now part and parcel of the protest features, with professional musicians using such occasions as easy promotional avenues. For example in 2002/3 the duo Gidigidi and Majimaji had the song "Unbwogable" acquire near cult status in the country by performing

during the Opposition rally at Uhuru Park. The image of the leading (then) opposition politicians jostling to appear on stage dancing or jumping to the fast paced tune of the song became the iconic portrait of protest across the country.

From the foregoing, it becomes apparent that there is a shift in the practice, perception and response to public protest in Kenya. Whereas the earlier ones were violent the latter are peaceful. The change of tact by the government has apparently forced the protest advocates to change the strategy into a contention over the symbolism and aesthetic appeal of protest events. In other words whereas in the 90s, the government responded with violence making demonstrations to be predicated upon all their performances on the aesthetics of violence, the latter has forced them to create scenes which are appealing and thus civilized.

While mobilization of the public constituency remained the obvious focus of the protests, the underlying ideology seems to have changed over time. Contention seems to have shifted also from the issues of political reforms and institutionalization of those reforms to the change of guard and position holders. The leaders of the protest seemed to say: 'we are not violent but good people who can be trusted'. Interestingly, over this period, Robert Greene's *48 Laws of Power*⁸ became a popular book, often quoted in news paper columns by the political elite. The significant thing about the book lies in its emphasis on ways of capturing and consolidating political and personal power rather than its institutionalization and democratization. Moi though the object of the protest, became the model for many of the party leaders as he declared himself a 'professor of politics'.

⁸ Greene's Book, modelled on Nicolo Machiavelli's *The Prince* discusses how individuals can acquire and keep power through tips such as how to attract attention, how people do not like change etc. it

The argument I am putting forward here is that the shift from transformative 'deconstruction of structures- oriented tactics' to the spectacle- oriented stylistics of protest events in the country does not seem an isolated happening but part of a series of changes in different aspects of the politics and thinking among the core national political elite that had emerged through the protest movement. While the former were conducted through violence prone confrontations, and therefore challenging both the actual and symbolic channels of power and engineering acts of destroying the old order, the new protest events are aesthetically performative and appealing to their audiences. The protest events constructed act with subdued emphasis on democratic institutionalization through constitutional reforms; instead highlighting leadership change.

Ultimately, the audience is hardly conceived as a resource to be mobilized for contention over reforms but as a voter to be persuaded – protest becomes political campaign arena and agency. In the end, the Kenyan protest events have apparently turned into campaign events for parties, particular groups or personalities; all presented as reform protest, in the name of the people- the ambiguous Kenyans. Writing in the *Sunday Nation*, May 27th 2007, Philip Ochieng succinctly underlines this trend:

During the multi-party campaigns of the 1990s, Nairobi's newsrooms were flooded with messages in 'Kenyans' name: 'Kenyans demand this'! Kenyans will do that'!
Yet no leader had consulted with Kenyans to speak genuinely for them. . . . Mere activism –the habit by the would be leader to make empty utterances straight out of the mind and then claim that the balderdash in the popular wish.

Something needs to be said about the popular forms of 'speaking for the Kenyans'. In the early days of the protest movement, violence was more fashionable. Street protest caused riots all over the city. The riots inevitably led to confrontations between protestors and the police, and non-participants were forced to join for their own safety. This nurtured

resentment against the government thus mobilizing for the political reform agenda: the more violent the more successful the protest. The relationship between the ordinary citizens with the State mitigated for the success of these early protest gaining popular legitimacy as a reflection of the popular wish. The government was clearly the “other” while the protest events were ‘ours’.

What I am proposing here is that the early forms of protest were also aided by the nature of government response to them, the distance between the political power class and the common people; and the manner in which power was appropriated to dominate and adjudicate resources in the country. The motif of insider-outsider was constantly highlighted thus emphasizing the alienation between the State and the people. What endured was the sense of threat and fear, and deprivation of access to the means and modes of accumulation, which could only nurture self-defence reactions from the people. Protest in Kenya was more an emotional self-preservation reaction among the common people and a self-promotion strategy among the aspiring of excluded political class.

But with the changing structure of the political power elite which has incorporated the mass action leadership over the years into its ranks, the distinctions between the protest movement and the government has become blurred. The atmosphere of confrontation has been replaced by one of negotiations; mutual understanding and grandstanding. Protest events are organized to attract media attention to individuals. The following event offers interesting insights:

The national electricity supplying company was demolishing houses constructed near its transformers because they endangered the residents. Mr. Reuben Ndolo, the Opposition Member of Parliament for Makadara, a constituency in Nairobi

addressed a public gathering and told the residents to 'necklace'⁹ the engineers of the company wherever they saw them because 'Kenyans wanted democracy'. The next day police try to question him. His supporters organize demonstrations while he calls a press conference.... Overnight Ndolo becomes a protest celebrity, performing off-key karaoke parodies during political meetings...(personal observations in 2003-4).

The end-result of such 'protests' is the progressive loss of purpose among the participants who can no longer recall the goal of such events. The public participation in such events becomes a way of showing allegiance to particular leaders of factions of politicians which might not in essence be any different from each other. The testimonies of participants in public rallies during the referendum campaigns in 2005 demonstrate this. David Mageria and Bryson Hull report the following:

Riots convulsed Nairobi for three days in July when the constitution text was published, leaving at least one dead. Eight more have died in riots around campaign rallies in past weeks. Many blame politicians for whipping up tribal animosities among Kenyans rather than seriously debating the complicated, long-term issues at stake. John Gadi, 30-year-old jobless father of two, told Reuters at the opposition rally: "I will vote No because Kibaki promised half a million jobs but he did not deliver. He is a big liar. I can't trust him again." At the government gathering, Njoki Kimunge, a 47-year-old mother of three from Kibaki's home area of Othaya, told reporters: "I do not understand the constitution. I hope today they will tell me all about it. We are supporting "Yes" because my children receive free education."¹⁰

⁹ Necklace somebody is a punishment for violent criminals by a mob where a car-tyre is put around somebody's neck and set ablaze. It is also referred to as 'put on a tyre'. In many ways it is also an act of protest against the government's failure to control crime.

¹⁰ Kibaki, after winning 2002 presidential elections introduced free primary education within months of taking power but reneged on a number of promises he made during the campaign, especially creating 500000 jobs annually and enacting anew constitution within 100 days of inauguration. He supported the banana camp during the referendum.

(2005, November, 19th) In

www.int.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=68&art_id=qw1132394943886B256 .

During the referendum campaigns, the overt use of entertainment clearly showed the way the aesthetics of protest performance had been deliberately inserted into what still remains of the protest movement to shift focus from transformation of the existing political order to personalities. This serves the interests of the status quo rather than threaten it. While the shift was subtly conducted and intricately woven into the reform rhetoric during the last years of the Moi regime, it has become more pronounced and publicly acknowledged. Even politicians have become bolder in emphasizing this. Two Statements by members of the current cabinet hitherto in the opposition during the Moi days tell a lot:

John Michuki (2003): *'we pushed for constitutional reforms because we wanted Moi out. We wanted one of our own inside. Now that he is gone and we have our people in government we do not need these reforms'*¹¹.

His cabinet colleague for Trade and Industry, Mukhisa Kituyi was quoted in 2003, soon after the NARC government took power *"Before [the opposition took power] we sang for the public. Now it is the public's turn to sing for us"*.¹²

The significance of the two Statements lies in their interpretations and explanations they offer for the change in focus about reforms and the role of public protest performances. For Michuki, reforms were a strategy to get Moi out of power and once 'one of their own' was in office and they had power the reforms had achieved their goal. Kituyi on the other hand highlights the forms and stylistics of protest events they had utilized during the protest,

¹¹ This was spoken in a public gathering of his constituents in his mother tongue hence the translation does not aptly capture the expression. This was in response to calls by members of parliament for the government to honour its pre-election pledges to enact a new constitution within 100 days in power. Michuki is the current Minister for State and Internal Security. He has served all governments in Kenya including the colonial regime in different capacities.)

revealing that they were a put on, a performance to get them into power hence expected the public to perform for them.

The reduction of the protest movement into these simple expedencies of political careerists can not be generalized. But it gives important insights into the eventual drift of the protest movement in Kenya. Eventually it has moved towards making its forms and structures into lobbying platform, doing political mercenary business. This is the ultimate finding of this thesis from which I turn back to the question whether the protest movement in Kenya viewed through the resource mobilization theory can still be seen as a form of social movement. It is hard to envision the prospects hence the subsequent question is: why is such a possibility –of the protest movement in Kenya emerging into a strong and established counter-public formation cycle of protest repertoires instead of mutating into the personalized lobbying projects for appropriation by politicians and other entrepreneurs-remote?

4.5 Rationality of Context: Explaining the Protest Movement in Kenya

The shifts in focus and leadership of the protest movement in Kenya seem to have a logic of their own. Informants I talked to had a myriad of explanations. Cyrus, a leading activist currently heading an NGO at the forefront of trying to revive public interest in the constitutional reforms had this to say:

Cyrus: Kenyans have put too much trust in leaders who have no vision for the

country. We are too tribal to focus on institutions so we focus on personalities.

Everybody see reforms as a way of getting one of their own into office.

¹² Kituyi, was a leading member of the pro-multiparty democracy campaigns in the early 90s and subtly shifted his emphasis to anti-Moi once he was elected to parliament. During the 2002 elections he entertained crowds by adapting popular Kenyan tunes into anti- Moi songs.

JB: Why is getting one of their own into office more important than the actual reform?

Cyrus: It is all about power (throws up hands in exasperation).

JB: What exactly about power?

Cyrus: Power means control of the State. Control of State means access to the national cake. Come on, you know these things. It is why we begun the reform movement in the first place.

JB: Then what has changed?

Cyrus: Nothing. Nothing... at least for some of us

JB: What of the others?

Cyrus: Well. I can not say they really changed ... but they see things a little different now.

You see for some Moi was the problem. For others, the opportunity to be in power was the reason ... it is complicated.

Indeed it is complicated. However, analysing Cyrus' responses reveals the explanations for the shifts lie in the focus and transformative thrust of the protest movement in Kenya. The overriding concern with the 'personal rather than the national or institutional comes out quite prominently. Cyrus identifies two reasons why the movement faces the challenges that have turned it into a public performance for the benefit of individual leaders and their cronies: the 'personality cult' syndrome where protestors put their trust in tribal spokesmen instead of institutions. This makes the protestors interpret reforms differently in terms of who leads the movements, who benefits from the movements or who leads the government at the time of the protest.

Some protestors at time do not even comprehensively know and/or understand what they are protesting against (or for) as a case in Kisumu city during the referendum campaigns showed. Youths demonstrating against the proposed draft Constitution which their local favourite politician did not approve set it on fire. As they danced around the bonfire lit using

copies of the draft constitution, a journalist asked them why they did not support it: the conversation in the journalist's notes went like this:

We do not want this constitution

Why?

It is bad for democracy.

How?

It gives the president too much power

Have you read it?

No. Raila¹³ told us so.

He said?

Yes. He has read it for us. And it is bad. We know it. So we are burning it.

What emerges from a critical reading of the two testimonies is the fact that the Kenyan political discourse is constructed around individuals hence even the protest movement has tended to focus on them. This could be an explanation to the shift in the thrust of the protest movement from issue-related agenda to the personal agenda activism. What this means is that the reforms movement stands held hostage to personal ambitions of the leadership hence its inability to effectively become a movement.

The other reason which comes out of Cyrus' interview is more fundamental and can also explain this process of personalization of the protest movement towards serving persona and at times sectarian interests. He says that 'they all want power because *'Power means control of the*

¹³ Raila Odinga is a leading opposition politician and son of Kenya's first vice president, Oginga Odinga. He commands a fanatical following among the Luo ethnic community in Kenya who are the majority in Kisumu city.

State. Control of State means access to the national cake. Come on, you know these things. It is why we begun the reform movement in the first place.'

This is the gist of the problems facing the protest movement in Kenya: the position of the State as the only repository of resources especially wealth-creating resources and the powers not only to control but also to distribute. So people protest with the intention of inserting themselves into the core of the State machinery to ensure they can get access to the 'national cake' and distribute it. This struggle for insertion into the core of the State and power is not limited to Kenya; it is a feature of politics in countries where the State is the dominant (in fact the only) structure for power and resource distribution. It not only controls but also owns the resources and power to create, mobilize and distribute the wealth. All other options are peripheral and in many ways still dependent on the State.

The shifts in the tone and manner of protesting in Kenya therefore seem to have been occasioned by the realization that the leading players in the reform movement are basically interested in having access to the state structure not necessarily to change it but to control it. The majority of the people can easily see through this necessitating camouflage; hence the focus on making the protest more appealing, friendlier and performatively inclusive. This not only gives legitimacy to claim-making but also gives credibility to the posture of spokespersonship by the protest leaders which ultimately makes them worth negotiating with. Protest events therefore are becoming more and more lobbying tactics for accessing certain State resources or means, power included by different members of the country's political class.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

In the last twenty years, Kenyan politics has witnessed tremendous political changes. The use of public protest as a way of contention and mobilization for political change has been central to these changes. In many ways, it developed into a protest movement, the publicly expressed amalgam of the many transformative struggles Kenyan social and political landscape. However, in the recent years, *there has been evident shift in the forms and apparent goals of the protest movement from institutional/structural transformation to personal /group contests over the State structure as it is*. This shift has been aided by dramatization and aestheticization of protest events in the country.

Kenyan protest history is highly personalized and based on grievances hinged on the personal rather than the collective. From the interviews and testimonies of the selected informants and review of media data, the profile of the Kenyan protest participant emerging is that of selfishly motivated leadership and a trusting populace that goes along them. It is also informed by a survival instinct that conceptualizes reform and change success and failure in terms of exclusion and inclusion within the State power structures. Thus it is all about acquiring the State power in order to be able to control the distribution and mobilization of resources particularly socio-economic such as employment and business among others. Ultimately because both sides of the political divide in the country share this interest, the radical protest movement which tried to take root in the early 90s appears to have been systematically stymied and moderated into a quasi-docile decent and aesthetically appealing series of conveniently assembled acts of claim-making. Thus it has of necessity in this new form acquired a performative aspect which is more theatrically inclined rather than transformative oriented.

The making of protest event more theatrical and thus appealing to a wider audience is in line with the wider marketing of particular political agenda within the various sides of the political class, which though couched in the language of change do not have the commitment of strategic intent of transforming the political structure by institutionalizing the rules and practise of politics. Instead they engender a process of creating and nurturing personality cults centred on individuals with messianic pretensions. The theatricality then becomes a strategy by these leaders, but also by the other protest participants to subvert both the antagonist of the protest in the first place, but also their own performance. The case of the women illustrates this: their nudity enhanced their case by revealing the callousness of the State, but it also showed them as culturally insensitive and 'not cultured'. Hence while the political elite who organized them have come to occupy political positions in the country and beyond, they have become obscure and forgotten.

The recurring highlight of this paper has been the emphasis and contradiction of the dramaturgy of public protest in Kenya. I have shown how different levels of performance have accompanied the protest movement in Kenya through cited events. I have also shown how the different forms of performance have evolved from violence to aesthetically appealing ways. I have also tried to offer insights into the logic behind the aestheticization of these protest events- precisely the evolvment of a careerist political state class committed to nothing but state power and see protest as a lobbying or bargaining strategy. The common citizen has also been co-opted into this, often as a performer in a long dramatic irony session: where while the political elite know what is going on, the protesting masses hardly have knowledge and comprehension of the bigger plot.

Therefore, I explore protest as a form of political contention in Kenya through the lens of the Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT). I show that public protest in Kenya is a rational, goal-oriented action as the RMT anticipates; but also, highly dramatized and personalized. I read performance of public protest as a form of recruitment into the Kenyan political class. It has become adopted to divert genuine struggles for transformation, instead being employed in the state class contests for control of the State structures amongst themselves thus subverting the ideal goals of protest social movement.

However since this study had only sought to explore whether protest as a strategy to profiteering by the political elite; I can only suggest that further research needs to be conducted on the politics of protest movements in Kenya with particular emphasis on the political elite. A critical question for such research could be: to what extent are the political elite in Kenya interested in institutionalized politics rather than personalized? Can politics and democracy be institutionalized in contexts where the State is the sole source and structure of accumulation whose control and dominance is the ultimate prize for contention?

Subsequently, I point out the inadequacy of RMT in explaining the Kenyan protest movement as it does not anticipate this contextual manipulative insertion of dramatized personalization into the repertoires of protest, and propose that RMT needs contextualization into the Kenyan form of politics and claim-making through use of state-class theory (SCT). Such an approach will appreciate the strengths of resource mobilization- the rationality and goal-orientation of protest actors; the character of State classes' relations of contention in contexts where the State is the ultimate vehicle for personal accumulation and social reproduction, and the particular forms of protest events' happenings. I further point out that the RTM needs testing in non-European/core political contexts such as Kenya where the State is manifestly a dominant dominion of the ruling elite while the

popular sector is for the masses largely surviving on the fringes unless when expediently recruited for legitimating of sectoral claims.

To this end, I have explored the question: what is the motivation and meaning of protest in Kenya? Through this question, I sought to explore through selected testimonies and archival data, what makes people participate in the protest in Kenya, and what such protests means to different people in the country. Observing that changes have occurred in the way the protest events are enacted, from violent to peaceful and 'decent', I also explored the possible explanations of such changes within the context of rationality, dramatization and personalization of the politics of contention. From this, I suggest that a personalized rationality of the emerging and shifting State class dominates and manipulates the nature and construct of the protest movement in Kenya as it controls and negotiates within itself, the control of the State structures for the accumulation, mobilization and distribution of socio-economic resources and socio-political reproduction.

Thus the Kenyan protests movement and the political context of the country can be read through the Resource Mobilization Theory if contextualized through the state-class theory perspective proposed by Friedman based on her study of the Congo. This will contribute to ensuring that dramatization and personalization of protest are fully addressed in the analysis of social movements, especially protest movements. I further point out that the RTM needs testing in non-European/ core political contexts such as Kenya where the State is manifestly a dominant dominion of the ruling elite while the popular sector is for the masses largely surviving on the fringes unless when expediently recruited for legitimating of sectoral claims.

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