



NAVARRA CENTER  
FOR **INTERNATIONAL**  
**DEVELOPMENT**

**SUPPORT FOR  
DEVOLUTION IN  
KENYA:  
A MULTILATERAL  
ANALYSIS**

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REVISED DECEMBER 2020

# ABSTRACT

## DEVOLUTION HAS IMPROVED LIVING STANDARDS AND A MAJORITY SUPPORT IT ACROSS KENYA

Kenya is in its most long-lasting decentralization period in its independent history. The 2010 Constitution created 47 counties to improve service delivery in the periphery, promote minorities' rights and unite the country. But is it working for everyone? This paper uses social, economic and political data to analyze the impact of county governments. Its short life span makes it difficult to find abundant and homogenous data and draw conclusions with precision, but available surveys and data give a good grasp of its trajectory. Overall, devolution has improved living standards and a majority of Kenyans support it all across the country. However, it has worked more in favor of larger communities than those minorities it aimed to promote. Most importantly, decentralization has fostered a national identity whilst reinforcing ethnic sentiment, proving both are not mutually exclusive and a peaceful coexistence between communities is possible●

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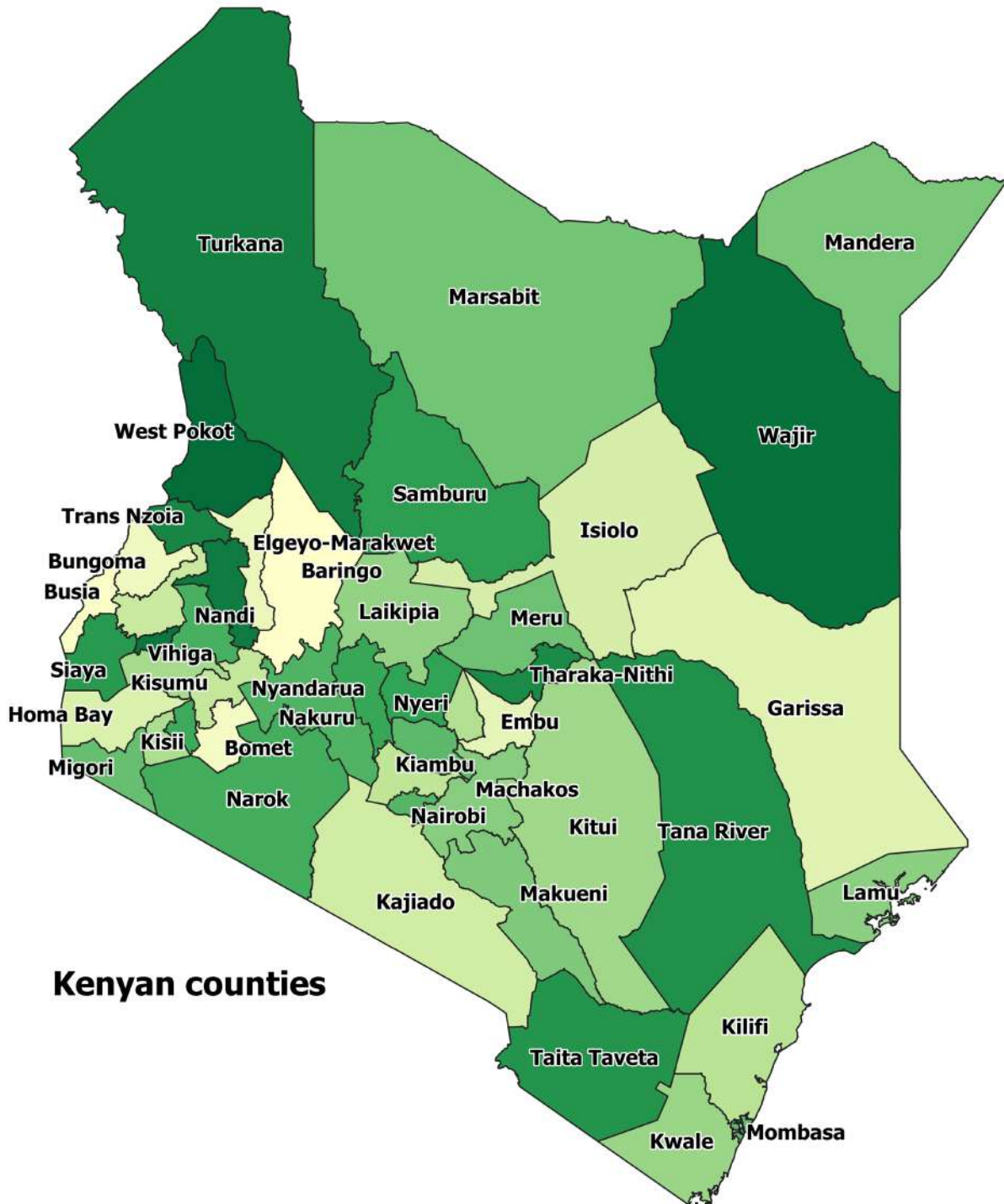
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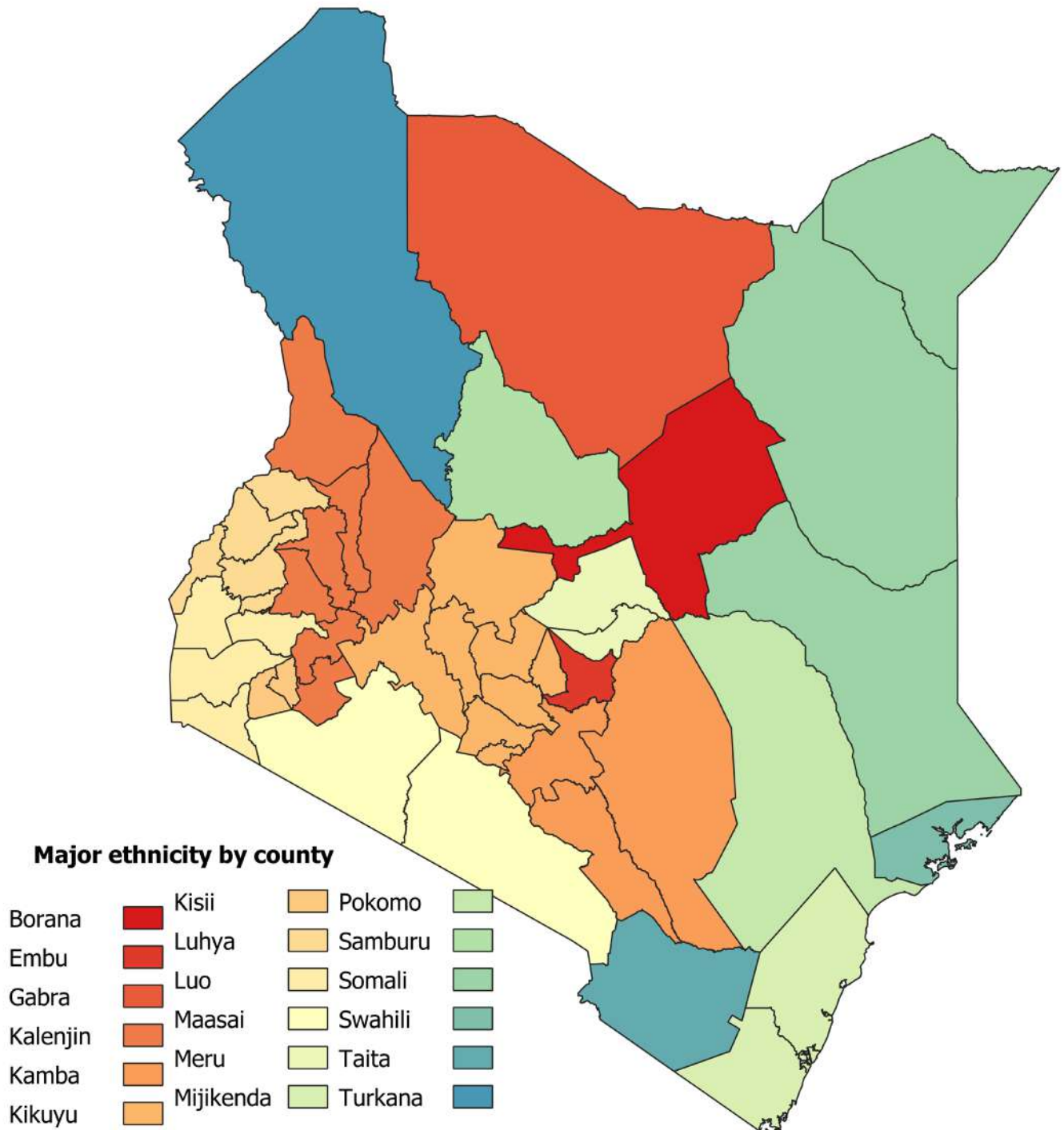
<i>Introduction</i>	<b>1</b>	The dichotomy between centralization or decentralization for the political organization of a state has permeated nations all around the world. Kenya has embarked in its most ambitious decentralization project ever since its independence in 1963.
<i>Decentralization in Kenya</i>	<b>2</b>	Kenya has experimented different phases of local government and administrative decentralization. Regional governments predate the country itself and its first independent Constitution 'Majimbo' promoted a federal state.
<i>Social, economic and political impact</i>	<b>3</b>	Devolution set two types of objectives: social and economic development, and national unity. Progress has been made, but objectives set in The Kenya Vision 2030 have not been achieved.
<i>Perceptions and support</i>	<b>4</b>	Popular support for devolution is strong all across Kenya, although significant differences emerge between regions, ethnic groups and political affiliation.
<i>Constraints and future paths</i>	<b>5</b>	Devolution's design has worked against its effectiveness through three decisive characteristics. Four different scenarios can be envisioned depending on political and public support.
<i>Conclusion</i>	<b>6</b>	Overall, satisfaction with devolution is high amongst Kenyans. More disaggregated data would help to shed light with higher precision on differences of support by counties and groups.

**MAP 1: ADMINISTRATIVE OF KENYA WITH THE CURRENT 47 COUNTIES**



**Note:** The intensity of the green was used to make it easier to differentiate between borders and does not obey to any other indication. Not all counties are named in the map due to a lack of space in small counties. Missing names are: Kirinyaga, Muranga, Uasin Gishu, Kericho, Kakamega and Nyamira.

**MAP 2: MAJOR ETHNIC GROUP REPRESENTED IN EACH OF THE 47 COUNTIES**



**Note:** 40 out of the 47 counties have more than a 75% of its population from the same ethnic group. 11 are practically mono-ethnic, with one group accounting 95% or more of the population. Only 7 counties do not have a majority ethnic group which reaches half of its population: Isiolo (37% Borana), Kajiado (44.5% Masaai), Lamu (30.2% Swahili), Marsabit (28.7% Gabra), Mombasa (30.1% Mijikenda), Nairobi (29.4% Kikuyu) and Tana River (27.5% Pokomo).

# **GLOSSARY**

## **ETHNIC GROUPS**

- Officially 45 ethnic groups live in Kenya, but some sources estimate there are up to 70 communities. These all come from the Bantu, Nilotic and Cushite ethnic families. Five ethnic groups account for two thirds of all Kenyans: Kikuyu, Luhya, Kalenjin, Luo and Kamba.
- Kikuyu - Main ethnic group, accounting for 17.1% of the population. Its people concentrate in the former Central Province and three out of four presidents come from this group: Jomo Kenyatta, Mwai Kibaki and Uhuru Kenyatta.
- Luhya - Second biggest ethnic group, accounting for 14.3% of the population. Its people concentrate in the former Rift Valley Province.
- Kalenjin - Third biggest ethnic group, accounting for 13.4% of the population. Its people concentrate in the former Rift Valley province in western Kenya. One president comes from this group: Daniel arap Moi.
- Luo - Fourth biggest ethnic group, accounting for 10.7% of the population. Its people concentrate in western Kenya, near Lake Victoria. The historically opposition leaders Jaramogi Oginga Odinga and his son Raila Odinga are part of this community.
- Kamba - Fifth biggest ethnic group, accounting for 9.8% of the population. Its people concentrate in the southeast part of the country.

## **TERMINOLOGY**

- Majimbo - Swahili term meaning “many districts” with which the original 1963 federal constitution was coined.

## **POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS**

- Mau Mau: Popular name of the rebel armed group Kenya Land and Freedom Army (KLFA) who rose in rebellion to British rule from 1952 to 1960.
- KAU - Kenyan African Union: Liberation movement born in 1944 to achieve independence from British rule.
- KANU - Kenya African National Union: Political party created from KAU which has ruled since independence in 1963 until 2002.
- KADU - Kenya African Democratic Union: Political party which promoted the federal Majimbo Constitution.
- NARC - National Rainbow Coalition: Coalition of opposition political parties which managed to win the 2002 elections. Its original formation was dissolved in 2005.
- ODM - Orange Democratic Movement: Official opposition party formed in 2005 after the dissolution of the original NARC coalition. It competed in the 2017 elections under the NASA alliance. Its leader is Raila Odinga.
- Jubilee Alliance: Coalition of political parties who won the 2013 elections with Uhuru Kenyatta as presidential candidate.
- NASA - National Super Alliance: Coalition of opposition political parties who lost in the 2017 elections.
- Jubilee Party: Political party currently in power. Formed after the merger of the parties in the Jubilee Alliance. Its leader is the current president, Uhuru Kenyatta.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

The dichotomy between centralization or decentralization for the political organization of a state has come across nations all around the world. This choice can be understood from different frames, but this paper will focus on political decentralization, which happens when a central government gives powers and resources to institutions representative of and accountable to a local population (Manor, 1999).

In theory, decentralization fosters public participation, transparency and an easier access to public institutions, whilst a centralized system is more cost-efficient, professional and has bigger capabilities. A pro-decentralization figure will defend that it is better to have public officials living next to you which know your priorities rather than someone taking decisions hundreds of kilometers away. On the other hand, those in favor of a centralized system will argue that local powers generate ineffective duplicities and will point out to the difficulty of creating adequate jurisdictions represent everyone (Porter et.al., 1976).



Moreover, there are a set of issues which can be argued in favor of both systems. On one side, scholars have argued that adding layers of government can lead to inefficiency and poor accountability, whilst others have pointed out that the monopoly of power by a central government fosters rigidity and increases the cost of implementing measures, leading to an inefficient system. Under this view, decentralization could benefit equity, offering better opportunities for the poor, as well as a better service delivery by devolving the control over resources (Boffa et.al., 2015) (Ribot, 2002) (World Bank, 1999) (Sewell, 1996) (Saito, 2000).

Another issue where there are arguments in favor of both systems is the fight against graft. Decentralization brings closer politicians and citizens, increasing the pressure for transparency and responsiveness. However, it can also be argued that it can get too close, as local officials may favor friends or relatives' interest as a result of giving power to unprepared people (Porter et.al., 1976) (Oates, 1972).

Moreover, decentralization has been argued to have benefits on public participation, democratization and national unity by sharing the political prize amongst different winners. An excessive gathering of power in hands of a reduced group tends to create authoritarian leaders who impose their legitimacy and treat citizens as their inferiors. However, an imperfect devolved system with

unprofessional local politicians can also decrease confidence in government and reduce its legitimacy. Local politicians lack in many cases the necessary training and preparation, which can leave many resources under the responsibility of unprepared, unqualified officers in a novel system of government, hindering development and efficiency. This is not unique to officials, but also to citizens. A decentralized form of government requires a high political culture in society and maturity to participate wisely in public affairs.

Africa isn't an exception to this paradigm. In 1990, countries signed the African Charter for Popular Participation in Development and Transformation in Arusha, Tanzania. The participants agreed that the continent suffered from an over-centralization of power that hindered public participation and sidelined the majority of the population from political, social and economic development. This can be explained due to several factors. First, the colonial past influenced the continent towards an over-centralization. Already in independence, many African nations faced a high sensitivity to external shocks, which pushed central governments to prioritize fiscal control over decentralization. Finally, central governments have usually designed decentralized systems from the centre outwards, deciding how much competences and money to transfer to local governments and therefore tying up the capacity of regional administrations (United Nations, 1990) (Farvacque-Vitkovic & Kopanyi, 2014) (Ndegwa, 2002) (ECA, 2010).

Across the continent, the debate between centralization or decentralization has focused on specific factors and goals affecting its nature. Multilateral organizations and donors have pursued an agenda of decentralization in the region to end autocratic regimes, foster national unity and improve service delivery. Decentralization's focus in the region has been double: it aims to develop poor re-

gions and decrease the likelihood of conflict by bringing together different communities (World Bank, 1999).

Scholars have found that in practice decentralization doesn't always meet such goals. Some countries have focused on the economic motives to engage in decentralization, whilst others have prioritized the need for political stability. Regarding economic outcomes, case studies show that in countries such as Ghana, Malawi and Uganda devolution hasn't helped to significantly reduce poverty levels, mainly due to implementation deficits. Where it has, such as in Tanzania, lacking funding for local institutions and necessary tools to raise funds have affected employment, income and provision of services (Crawford & Hartmann, 2008).

In some countries, experiences with violence and the fear of increased conflict has pushed politicians towards decentralization. The aim is to give power to traditionally excluded communities and hence improve political inclusion and representativity, but case studies in Rwanda and Uganda show this may not always be the case. These show that the geographical design of devolution is of vital importance, as the division can tie communities to territories, creating a sense of entitlement that can foster local conflict and cause a double marginalisation of minorities (Crawford & Hartmann, 2008) (Cornell & D'Arcy, 2016)

In this paper I will dive into how devolution is working in a recent case in Africa: Kenya. After the disputed 2007 elections, Kenya erupted into its worst violent episode in independent history, leaving at least 1,000 people dead and 700,000 displaced. The country was as divided as ever under ethnic lines and there was a real fear that the conflict could escalate further. However, president Mwai

## **DEVOLUTION SUPPORTERS ARGUE ITS BETTER FOR ECONOMIC & DEMOCRATIC OUTCOMES**



Kibaki and opponent Raila Odinga ushered a much-needed coalition agreement with the promise of drafting a new constitution that would recognize the need for a change in the state model (Lynch, 2009) (Cheeseman, 2008).

The country enshrined in its 2010 Constitution its most ambitious devolution project after four decades of having a centralized system. It organized into 47 counties, each with its own County Assembly and regional powers elected through the ballot. The division was based on the colonial era districts rather than the already existent provincial division, the demarcations the British used to divide the Kenyan population by communities. This created mono-ethnic mini-states, with 40 counties having more than 75% of its population of one community and only 7 having no ethnic group accounting for more than 50% of the total population (Burbidge, 2019).

The objective of this paper is to analyze Kenyans' support towards devolution and how it has affected national unity. To do so, there is an analysis of its effect on the provision of services and on the political organization across the country. The lack of disaggregated data for many economic and social variables hinders the possibility of a far-reaching study and limits the scope of the paper. In it, I use the available empirical data at county-level and secondary surveys together with the qualitative input of some of the most relevant political economy scholars of Kenya.

The first section of the paper briefly goes through Kenya's history and devolution's objectives, followed by an analysis of its social, economic and political impact. The paper then dives into devolution's support across Kenya. Finally, there is an area dedicated to the project's constraints and potential future paths, before some final remarks.

## **2. DEVOLUTION IN KENYA**

Throughout its history, Kenya has experimented with both centralization and decentralization. It is important to revise these phases as they have an influence on the opinion citizens have today towards devolution.

In Ancient Kenya, three main ethnic groups—the Cushites, Nilotics, and Bantu—inhabited its current territory. They each established their own decision-making groups formed by elders, mainly set to manage land issues. Such was the case inside the Bantu group of the Kikuyu, who in the 19th Century established the role of the Muthamaki, the head of the family, and inside the Nilotics group of the Luo, who organised into small territorial units named Pinje. It is vital to understand that these communities are older than the country itself. It wasn't until British colonization in the early 20th Century that Kenya started to exist as a unitary entity. Until then, Kenya wasn't even a country, just “a footpath a thousand kilometers long” (Phagudom, 2014) (Ombongi & Rutten, 2005).

The British introduced a centralized structure of government, but they also contributed to shape today's devolution by dividing the country into Native Reserves, zones of ethnic homogeneity. Under this policy of 'divide-and-rule', each community was confined into its own territory, out of which it could only go out with a special pass named kipande, which was normally rejected when requested. This way colonial authorities prevented mass mobilisations by constraining movement and, at the same time, matched ethnic groups to territories, fostering a sense of belonging whilst preventing the formation of a national sentiment (Burbidge, 2019).

This geographical separation has been used as the basis for the creation of the new 47 counties. Kenya's past and British rule reinforced the community sentiment against national unity, which caused that after independence politics was divided among ethnic lines. Each leader drives support mainly from its ethnic group, using identity as

a tool to garner votes and dismiss its opponents. However, only a year after independence, the country was organized into a unitary centralized state, which created winners and losers and diminished plurality. This provoked a clear-cut division between citizens who reaped the rewards of their fellow members being in power and those who didn't. The territorial division in 2010 into practically mono-ethnic counties was done with the intention to end the winner-takes-all system and improve stability by giving power to communities usually neglected from power.

At its independence in 1963, Kenya debated between setting up as a centralized or decentralized state. Initially, an agreement was reached to create a federal system known as Majimbo —which in Kiswahili means “many districts”—, which aimed to put emphasis on local authorities and have a small and reduced central government. However, this system didn't last long, as president Jomo Kenyatta dismissed it a year after he was elected in the first post independence elections. Kenyatta was a supporter of centralization, as he believed that a true Kenyan national identity could only be achieved if each one's ethnicity was eliminated. His government approved a new unitary Constitution and portrayed Majimbo as an anti-nationalist and pro-tribalist project which went against the country's unity (Burbidge, 2019).

During the next decades, the central government reversed many of the responsibilities and funding given to local authorities. It wasn't until the 1990s that Kenya started opening to decentralization again. Driven by civil society and international donors, president Daniel arap Moi reintroduced the multi-party system in 1992 (World Bank, 1999) (Rocaboy et.al., 2013). This brought back political competition and increased demands for greater regional power, but things didn't change under his regime (Southall and Wood, 1996). Despite promises by the following president, Mwai Ki-

baki, of enacting a new Constitution with decentralized powers, he went against the initial parliamentary system proposed in the Bomas Draft (Ghai, 2020). Devolution was not compromised until after the 2007 postelectoral violence, which made the political class fear the conflict could escalate into a civil war (Cheeseman, 2020).

The need for stability and the urgency of drafting a new constitution ended up creating a much extended decentralization than the one initially set in the Bomas Draft (Cheeseman et.al., 2016). With it, the newly formed coalition government aimed to prevent further episodes of extended violence that risked economic growth by reducing the stakes at the presidential elections through the creation of local contests. The instability and uncertainty that the country ran into meant a severe threat to the country's plans of transforming into a middle-income economy.

In June 2008, months after the coalition government agreement, the Government of Kenya published its strategic document Vision 2030. The policy aims to eradicate poverty and lift Kenya into an upper middle-income country by its end date (Government of Kenya, 2007). In 2014, the country went from being considered a low income country to a lower-middle income one under the World Bank's consideration (Business Today, 2014) (World Bank, 2020). However, the country's aim to enter the next category was considered in 2016 as “farfetched” by the World Bank, which noted it would have to sustain a 7% annual GDP growth, only obtained four times in the last forty years, and increase five times its GNI per capita (Handjiski et. al., 2016).

Devolution's objectives mark the areas which it aims to improve to leap Kenya into an upper-middle income country. The 2010 Constitution specifies as its goals to

## **MAJIMBO WAS THE FEDERAL PROJECT WHICH JUST LASTED ONE YEAR BACK IN 1963**

provide proximate and easily accessible services, ensure an equitable share of resources between regions, enhance the separations of powers, protect and promote minority communities' interests, increase people's participation in decision-making and uphold political accountability and democratic values.

Notwithstanding, one objective marks a clear breakthrough with the past. The 2010 Constitution specifies the need "to foster national unity by recognising diversity". Promoting such diversity is admitting a failure of four decades of policies which intended to create a Kenyan identity by eliminating ethnic sentiments. In this sense, devolution comes closer to the approach envisioned by the Majimbo project. However, links between the two have been avoided due to the negative publicity the term has, even preferring to use the word *ugatuzi* to translate devolution into Kiswahili (Burbidge, 2019).

Before devolution, Kenya organized into seven provinces plus Nairobi. Since it came into effect in 2013, the country is organized into 47 counties each with its own County Assembly, governor, deputy governor and county executive committee, mirroring the formation at the national level. Counties have competences over 14 areas, including agriculture, health, transport and public services such as water and sanitation. However, national government keeps important responsibilities such as education —except for preprimary—, land and security. Regarding financing, the central government allocates a 15% of the national budget, which multiplies by five the amount of money received until then by local authorities. Despite this, counties have limited fiscal capacity, as they can only raise taxes on property and entertainment, but not on income, customs or value added taxes. Moreover, the 2010 Constitution created a Senate at the national level to deal with regional affairs over funding, debt capacity and border disputes between counties (Rocaboy et.al., 2013)

A decade after the approval of the new constitution and seven years after devolution kick-started, its path must be reviewed. The next two sections aim to do so.

## 3. IMPACT OF DEVOLUTION

Kenya's Vision 2030 aimed to reform three main sectors: the economic, social and political pillars of the country. Devolution's impact can be measured through these different lens, focusing on the responsibilities allocated to the newly created regional offices. A total of 14 competences were devolved to county-level. The three most relevant for Kenya's social and economic development are health, infrastructure and agricultural policies. This section will first dive into some data to analyze how these three sectors have developed since devolution and affected macroeconomic outcomes.

Moreover, devolution's objective of unifying Kenyans can't only be measured by looking at numbers. This section will also analyze how the new system has changed the political landscape in the country and helped or not towards achieving national unity beyond ethnic identity.

Drawing a general conclusion for all Kenya would be misleading. This section disaggregates how devolution has faired differently between counties to analyze who has benefited more from it. This is important to check if the new decentralized system has actually met its goals of promoting minorities' interests and provided easy accessible services for all. Here, the paper looks at the importance of ethnicity when looking at the different degrees of development counties have experienced in order to understand how support towards devolution varies across communities.



# SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

## HEALTH

When the 2010 Constitution was approved, Kenya's health system was under-serviced, according to official data. The country had a density of 1.18 facilities and 16.9 health professionals per 10,000 people, under the minimum acceptable threshold of the World Health Organization (WHO), set at 2.2 facilities and 22.8 personnel per 10,000 people (Luoma et.al.,2010). A decade later, results are mixed. By 2018, health facilities had nearly doubled, but on the other hand personnel density went down to 15.8 per 10,000 people (MoH, 2020). This means that under devolution Kenya has increased its health facilities, but these are still understaffed.

Health standards require for two medical officers and three midwives per centre. In 2018, Kenya only had 23 medical officers and 40 midwives per 100 centres (MoH, 2020). A majority of Kenya's health centres literally do not have medical personnel to attend patients. This goes in line with Prof. David Sperling's remarks, who found medical centers closed due to a lack of nurses whilst driving towards the north of the country, as well as records of vans painted as ambulances but empty of medical equipment. How can this happen? There are several aspects to be taken into account.

When devolution was agreed, a three-year plan was proposed to progressively decentralize competences. As Prof. Winnie Mitullah notes, on a first instance a Transitional Authority was created to foster a smooth transition of competences and ensure counties weren't given what they couldn't do. However, once elections happened and devolution came into effect, all county politicians asked for the same functions as their neighbors, which the national government accepted (Okech, 2017). Many counties couldn't meet their responsibilities during the first years, as a result of lack of preparation.

Moreover, the available data shows the vast differences between rural and urban areas and across counties. A total of 42% of doctors and 13% nurses worked only in Kenya's two major hospitals, leaving rural dispensaries only covering 20% of their nursing spots, whilst urban hospitals were at a 120% fill rate. (Luoma et.al.,2010). Out of the 47 counties, only 6 have achieved the WHO personnel requirements.

Counties in the former Central, Western and Nairobi Provinces, where the largest ethnic groups live, have better results than those regions inhabited by traditionally marginalized communities. In such counties, health expenditure pairs with an improvement in standards. For example, Siaya County, mainly inhabited by the Luo community, multiplied by four its expenditure, totalling a 26.9% of its budget. This goes in line with a decrease in HIV mortality by 15.3% in the last decade. On the other hand, Wajir County, mainly inhabited by the minority Somali population, only reduced its HIV mortality by 4.4% (Burbidge, 2019) (Achoki, et.al., 2019).

This follows a trend also seen in other areas such as maternal and childcare healthcare, which doesn't even cover half of the population at the northwestern counties of Wajir (42%) and Mandera (36%), whilst the assistance doubles in former Central Province territory of Kirinyaga County (84%). This leaves under assisted counties such as northern Turkana County with a large dependence on donors, who by 2017 still contributed a 30% of the region's total health expenditure. (Maina et. al., 2016) (Khaoya et.al., 2019)

## INFRASTRUCTURE

The Government of Kenya's Vision 2030 set as its main aim to make all the country accessible by connecting all its citizens to a well-conditioned road in a range of two kilometres from their household (MoRPW, 2006) (Government of Kenya, 2007).

Kenya's road system is extremely unequal across the country. Almost 40% of households were at least 5km away from a paved road in 2014. Roads are concentrated between Mombasa in the southeast and Malaba in the west passing through Nairobi in the centre, leaving the rest of the country disconnected (Bhaktal, et.al., 2016).

This road map favours those from the largest ethnic groups. Those counties with a majority population of one of the five biggest ethnic groups have almost all of their households less than 5 km away from a road, being the worst off Baringo County, with a Kalenjin community majority and a 77% access. On the contrary, historically neglected areas and marginalized communities are in disadvantage, with up to 9 counties having less than two thirds of its people with access to a road within 5km of their home (Simonet, 2016) (ODI, 2017). As you go north, the situation gets worse. In Wajir County, only 15% of households live within 5 km of a road. (Simonet, 2016) (ODI, 2017).

Major differences appear in infrastructure expenditure too. Nationwide, the government has multiplied by three its investment in roads from 2006 up until 2016, being the service where it is increasing its expenditure the most. However, whilst counties spend on average a quarter of their development budget on roads, only three counties invest more than the minimum necessary to provide road access to their entire population. Here, massive differences come out again between communities. Whilst Machakos County—with a majority of Kamba population, the fifth biggest ethnic group across Kenya— spends twice than what is expected, Turkana—with a predominant Turkana population— only dedicates a 10% of what it is needed to improve its road system (Bhaktal, et.al., 2016).

## **AGRICULTURE**

Agriculture has been since independence the most important sector in terms of economic incidence, employment and exports, with tea and flowers as two of its main products sold abroad (OEC, 2018). Vision 2030 emphasizes the need of adding value to agricultural products and redirecting its focus towards a commercial agriculture with the aim of achieving 100% food security by 2022 (Government of Kenya, 2007) (Wankuru et.al., 2016).

## **AGRICULTURE REPRESENTS A THIRD OF KENYA'S GDP EVEN THOUGH 83% OF THE LAND IS ARID**

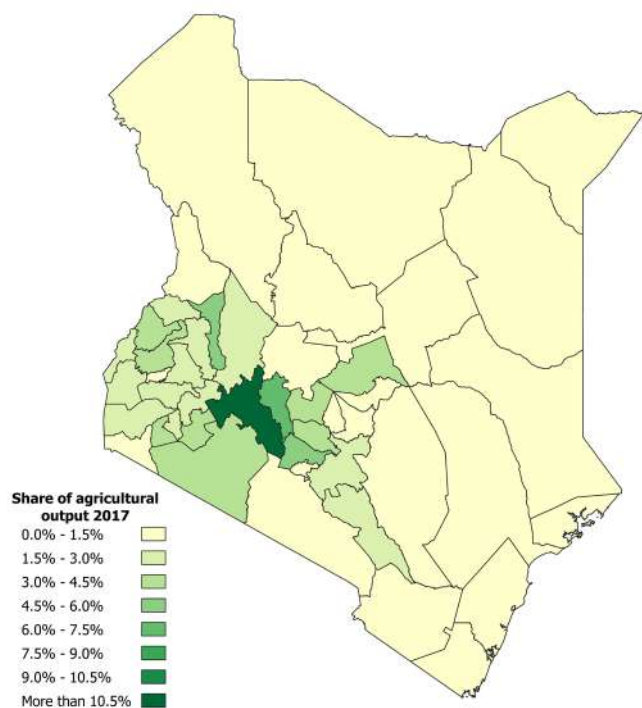
Devolution has increased agriculture's importance as a sector of the GDP, which has gone from 26.44% in 2013 to 34.19% in 2018 (Plecher, 2020). At the same time, employment in agriculture has slightly but steadily decreased from a 59% of the population to a 54.2%, showing a productivity increase (TE, 2020) (World Bank, 2020).

The focus on agriculture outlined by the Government of Kenya in 2007 has benefited those areas with higher productive lands, which are very concentrated in the central and western parts of the country. Nakuru, Nyandarua, Kiambu, Elgeyo Marakwet and Meru are the five counties with biggest agricultural output. In all of

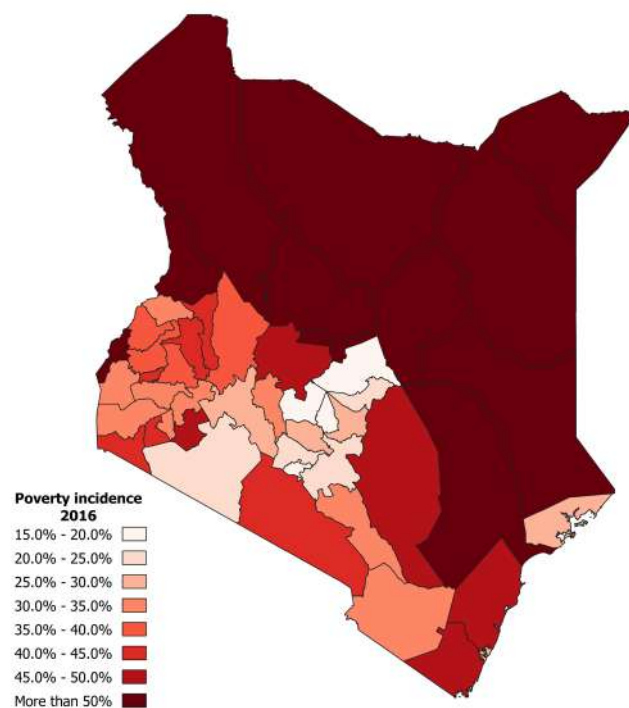
these the largest ethnic group is one inside the coalition at national government: Kikuyu—Nakuru, Nyandarua, Kiambu—, Meru—Meru— and Kalenjin—(Elgeyo Marakwet— (Burbidge, 2019). President Kenyatta is a Kikuyu and his vice-president William Ruto a Kalenjin, and hence the agricultural-intensive policy benefit their communities.

These lands only represent a small portion of Kenya's territory. An 83% of its land is arid or semi-arid, especially in the underdeveloped north and east. Despite this natural disadvantage, the government hasn't pushed policies to reduce inequalities, favouring big landowners belonging to the largest ethnic groups. Irrigation is only

**MAP 3: COUNTY SHARE OF AGRICULTURAL CONTRIBUTION TO GDP**



**MAP 4: POVERTY INCIDENCE AT COUNTY LEVEL**



present at 2% of the country’s arable land and banking institutions only dedicate a 4% of its credit financing to small landowners, which account for three quarters of overall production (Wankuru et.al., 2019) (Birch, 2018).

This vast differences have an impact on poverty across Kenya. The country’s average rate has fallen from a 46.8% in 2006 to a 33.1% in 2020 (Pape, 2020). However, whilst all counties in the former Central Province plus Nairobi, inhabited mainly by the largest ethnic groups, are below national poverty levels, 22 out of 47 counties have higher poverty levels than the national average (KNBS, 2018). Notwithstanding, the 10 counties with the highest poverty levels all have a majority of its population from a minority ethnic group in Kenya, with the exception of Busia and West Pokot. These are the Borana —majority in Isiolo and Marsabit counties—, Somali —majority in Garissa, Mandera and Wajir counties—, Orma—majority in Tana River—, Samburu and Turkana communities (Burbidge, 2019).

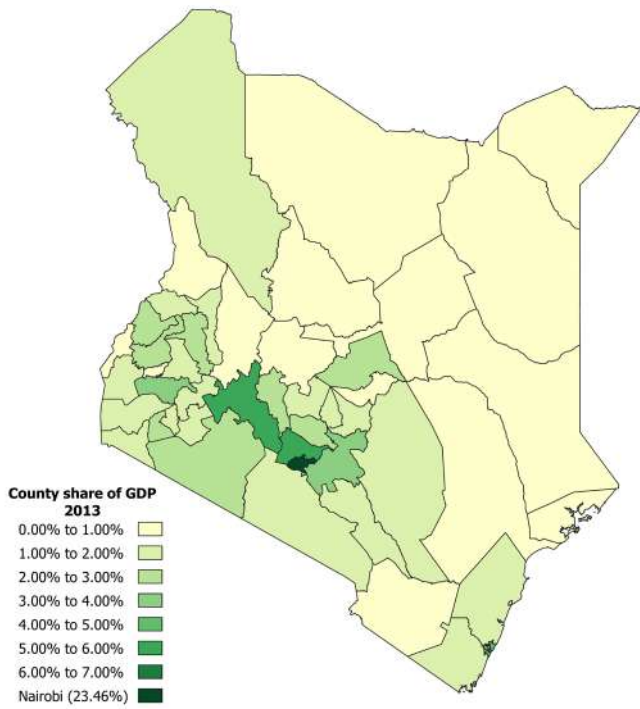
## **ECONOMIC GROWTH AND INEQUALITY**

Kenya set in its Vision 2030 the goal of sustaining an annual GDP growth of 10%. This has not been achieved and the global pandemic has affected the expected progress of the country. The economic crisis derived from the coronavirus has caused the first recession since the one caused by post-election violence in 2008. Official unemployment has doubled to 10.4% and poverty has increased by four points, an additional two million people. The World Bank predicts that the economy will contract by 1.5% in 2020, but expects a rapid recovery already in 2021, with an expected growth of 6.9% (World Bank, 2020).

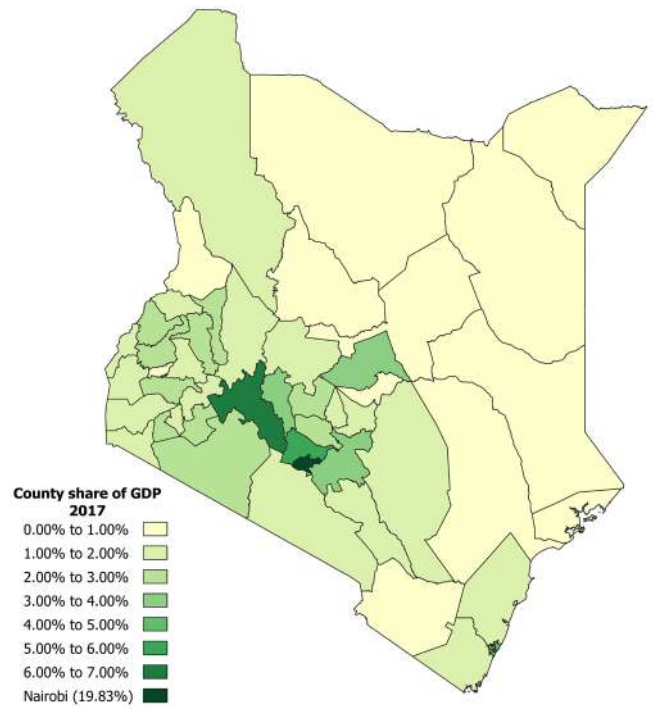
Despite not achieving the ideal growth, Kenya’s relative stability during the last decade has allowed it to surpass Angola as Sub-Saharan Africa’s third largest economy, according to the International Monetary Fund (Naidoo, 2020). The oil intensive southwestern country has seen its economy contract since 2016 due to declining oil prices, and Kenya’s non-resource-intensive economy has worked in its favor.

Overall, all counties have benefited economically from devolution. However, the biggest growth by counties can

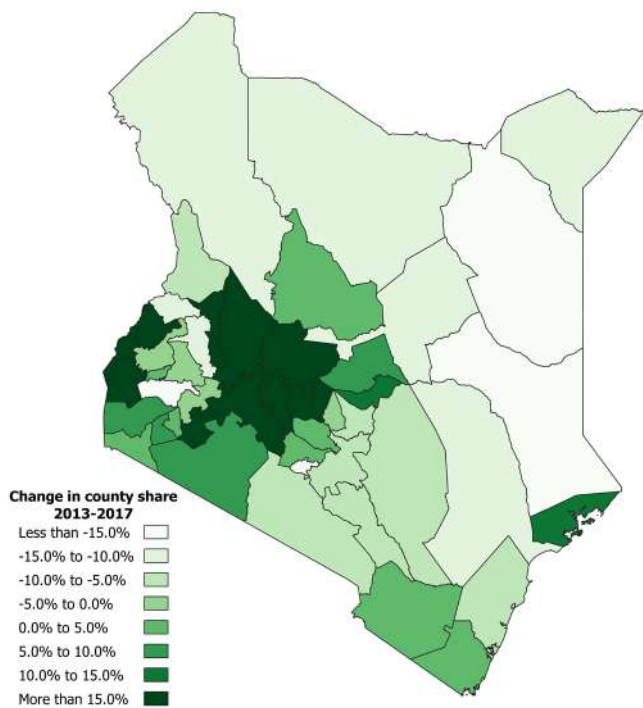
**MAP 5: COUNTY SHARE OF GDP AT THE START OF DEVOLUTION**



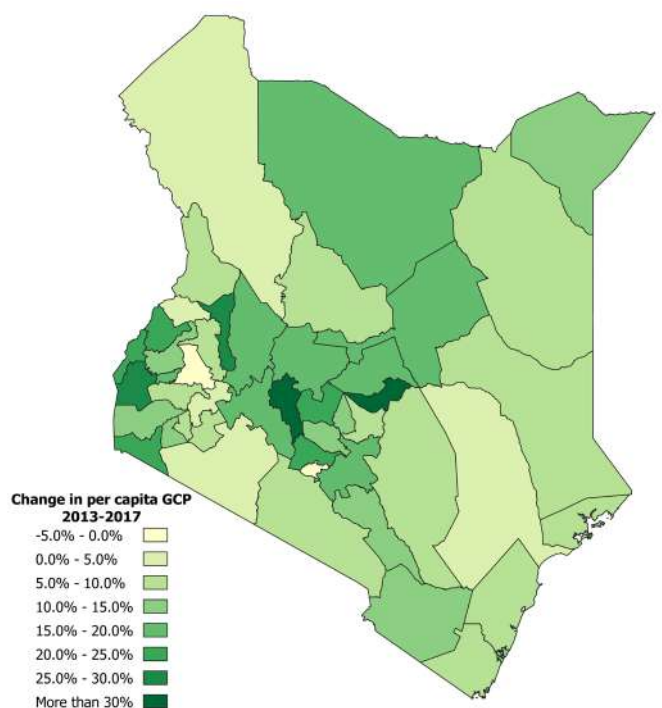
**MAP 6: COUNTY SHARE OF GDP FOUR YEARS INTO DEVOLUTION**



**MAP 7: CHANGE IN COUNTY SHARE OF GDP WITH DEVOLUTION**



**MAP 8: CHANGE IN PER CAPITA GROSS COUNTY PRODUCT 2013-2017**



be seen in regions governed and inhabited by majority Kikuyu and Kalenjin populations, where agriculture has a big role (Burbidge, 2019). The highest increase in Gross County Product (GCP) has been experienced by those counties with the highest agricultural output. Nakuru, Nyandarua and Elgeyo Marakwet are the three counties with biggest growth and also three of the four with most value added by agriculture. On the other side, the mostly urban counties of Nairobi, Mombasa, Machakos and Kisumu have all reduced their contribution to the national GDP (KNBS, 2019).

Despite this variance, there is yet much to be done to achieve equality amongst Kenyans. Nairobi makes up one fifth of Kenya's GDP, the same amount as that of the following four counties put together: Nakuru, Kiambu, Mombasa and Machakos. Moreover, the smallest economies haven't increased their share significantly, with a total of ten counties still contributing less than 1% to Kenya's GDP (KNBS, 2019). This leaves a massive difference between the contribution of the smallest economy, Isiolo County (0.2%) and the biggest, Nairobi County (19.8%). Moreover, this reflects on the GCP per capita, which is still seven times higher in Nairobi than in Mandera (KNBS, 2019).

## **POLITICAL MATURITY**

Devolution came with a triple political objective: to share power with minority communities, de-ethnicize the political field and bring decision-making closer to citizens and increase accountability.

## **DEMOCRATIZATION OF POWER**

One of devolution's main aims was to share power which traditionally had been in hands of a powerful president (Cheeseman et. al., 2016). This system created a unique winner, which raised the stakes during election-periods, increasing the likeness of conflict and generated inequa-

lities between regions. As ethnic favouritism rooted politics, those regions who shared community with that of the president benefitted from greater development than other parts of the country (Cheeseman et. al., 2020).

In 2013, for the first time in independent Kenya, several minority communities gathered power. A total of 18 governors were elected from 12 ethnic groups outside the five largest communities that traditionally have had power, as can be seen in Figure 1 (Cornell & D'Arcy, 2016) (Burbidge, 2019).

# **DESPITE DEVOLUTION, NAIROBI ACCOUNTS STILL FOR ONE FIFTH OF KENYA'S GDP**

Overall, devolution has improved governance and democracy in Kenya. According to the Mo Ibrahim Index of Good Governance, Kenya has improved its governance in 6.1 points since 2008, with a notable increase in the democratic elections category (MIF, 2018). In this line, The Economist Intelligence Unit has increased Kenya's democracy score in its index since devolution, going from a 4.71/10 score in 2013 to a 5.18/10 rating in 2019. However, this is insufficient to be considered a democracy, and the country is still considered a hybrid regime (EIU, 2020).

The 2017 elections show how the new Constitution has worked in favor of governance and stability. The Supreme Court nullified the elections which incumbent president Kenyatta had won with 54% of the votes, alleging it wasn't conducted in line with the Constitution. This unprecedented ruling —not only in Kenya, but all across Africa— was possible thanks to the 2010 Constitution which created the Supreme Court to reinforce the independence of the judiciary and with it, a channel for opposition leaders to drive their complaints away from the street (Cheeseman et. al., 2019) (Mbaku, 2017).



FIGURE 1: ETHNIC GROUPS REPRESENTED BY GOVERNORS ASIDE THE FIVE LARGEST GROUPS

## GOVERNORS FROM MINORITY COMMUNITIES

\*ELECTED FOR THE FIRST TERM 2013-2017

<b>BORANA</b> ISIOLO AND MARSABIT COUNTIES	<b>MAASAI</b> KALJADO AND NAROK COUNTIES	<b>ORMA</b> TANA RIVER COUNTY	<b>SWAHILI</b> LAMU COUNTY
<b>EMBU</b> EMBU COUNTY	<b>MERU</b> MERU COUNTY	<b>SAMBURU</b> SAMBURU COUNTY	<b>TAITA</b> TAITA TAVETA COUNTY
<b>KISII</b> KISII COUNTY	<b>MIJIKENDA</b> KILIFI, KWALE AND MOMBASA COUNTIES	<b>SOMALI</b> GARISSA, MANDERA AND WAJIR COUNTIES	<b>TURKANA</b> TURKANA COUNTY

SOURCE: AN EXPERIMENT IN DEVOLUTION, DOMINIC BURBIDGE, 2019. AUTHOR: DAVID SOLER CRESPO

Moreover, despite initial violence that left 12 people dead and 100 injured, devolution helped to prevent post-election conflict from escalating after nullifying the 2017 election and the announcement of the boycott of the re-run by opposition candidate Odinga (HRW, 2017). By introducing regional races, the stakes of presidential elections have reduced also the possibilities of local politicians stoking conflict, as they have a genuine interest in avoiding violence in their home areas (Cheeseman et al., 2019).

### **CHANGING THE WHO, NOT THE HOW**

Whilst the decentralized system has created the biggest political change in post-independence Kenya, it hasn't modified its nature, form and value. Devolution has increased the political winners in a regional system which replicates the mechanisms and norms that rule national politics, exacerbating both its good and bad provisions. It has basically changed who benefits from the system — from one president and national government, to 47 governors and county governments— whilst maintaining a winners vs losers system.

The first-past-the-post electoral system has traditionally given candidates of larger ethnic groups an advantage when facing elections (Nyabira & Mabonga, 2019). To date, three presidents have been from the Kikuyu community —Jomo Kenyatta, Mwai Kibaki and Uhuru Kenyatta— and one, Kalenjin —Daniel arap Moi—. In a political system organised amongst ethnic lines, this has meant only a third of Kenyans have felt represented in power prior to devolution, as Kikuyus account for 17.1% and Kalenjins for 13.4% of the total population (KNBS, 2019).

The new political system has brought winners to the table but has failed to change the system to better represent minorities. All 18 governors from minority groups at the national level were from the community which represents a majority in their county, replicating the so-called 'tyranny of the majority' at the local level (Burbidge, 2019) (Cornell & D'Arcy, 2016). This has caused a double marginalization for people who either live in a county where their ethnic group is a minority or directly are part of a community that doesn't have a majority at all in any county. This is the case of 2.9 million Kenyans from five groups which lack a majority in their home counties: the Kuria in Migori County, Marakwet in Elgeyo-Marakwet County, Nubians in Nairobi County, Ogiek in Nakuru County and Sabaot in Bungoma County (Cornell & D'Arcy, 2016) (Nyabira & Mabonga, 2019).

This double marginalization of minorities occurs because politicians at a county level still believe playing on identity still is the best way to access power (Cheeseman et al., 2020). The tendency is for majority ethnic groups to dominate political representation. Groups who haven't historically won at the national arena now have a chance of winning at county level and candidates make clear to their co-ethnics that they will benefit from them being in power (D'Arcy & Cornell, 2016).

Whilst ethnicity is an important factor in Kenyan politics, it is incorrect to focus purely on it. One also has to look at other factors such as the power of political elites. Opening up the winners introduced regional elites to power, giving leaders of smaller communities a second way of obtaining the resources accessed through public office (Cornell & D'Arcy, 2016). This was an intelligent move to reduce ethnic violence by a political class which has always prioritized reaching agreements between themselves when their differences have caused violent conflict and posed a serious threat to the status-quo (Cheeseman et al., 2019).

Overall, whilst devolution has brought the biggest political change Kenya has ever experienced, the foundations of its system remain untouched and have been replicated at a county level. Ethnic mobilization still drives politics, the electoral system now causes a double marginalization for minorities and the political elite have cemented the system by creating more winners.



## 4. PERCEPTIONS AND SUPPORT FOR DEVOLUTION

Devolution has sought to improve service delivery, increase public participation in politics and unite Kenyans. As its main aims, it is vital to see how Kenyans feel these tasks have fared in its first ten years. All these put together will help to understand the overall support towards decentralization in Kenya. Information over country-wide perceptions on such aspects is limited as there is a lack of data for most counties. To get a grasp, this section will use both nationwide polls in the initial years of devolution as well as a recent surveys conducted ethnically and geographically diverse counties.

### SERVICE DELIVERY

A 2019 Afrobarometer survey found citizens divided. A 48.8% agreed that devolution had improved service provision, but a 48.5% said counties had failed to allocate the resources given to them by the national government and shouldn't receive more funding to do so (Mitullah & Oyuke, 2020). Different polls throughout the years help us differentiate per type of sector and grasp support throughout the years.

After their first year in office, a majority of Kenyans approved how county officials were dealing with health services. The 2014 Afrobarometer poll showed a 54% of citizens considered counties where doing a good job in health matters. This number was higher in a Sauti za Wananchi survey done one year later, which found citizens gave counties at least a 60% approval rating on healthcare. (Mitullah, 2016) (Opalo, 2020).

Interestingly, this poll showed those endorsing president Kenyatta's supported even more the performance of counties on health related issues than those in favor of the opposition. However, a 2019 poll on Kirinyaga, Makeni and Uasin Gishu counties found the contrary. Only a 30% of those in Kirinyaga, which has a majority Kikuyu population that aligns with the president, considered health services had improved with devolution,

whilst a majority 85.6% did so in Makueni, a county with a majority Kamba population and a governor not supportive of the Kenyatta's political party.

Notwithstanding, a 70.6% of those in Uasin Gishu, a county with a majority Kalenjin ethnicity like that of vice-president William Ruto, did say healthcare had improved since devolution in their area.

Aside from ethnicity, location is important to understand such differences. Whilst Kirinyaga is located in former Central Province, an area traditionally favourable to centralism, Makueni and Uasin Gishu are far away from Nairobi and therefore in principle more supportive of local governance (Opalo, 2020).

A similar opinion is drawn on infrastructure. The 2014 Afrobarometer nationwide survey found a 55% of respondents rated county performance on roads as badly. However, at least on the three counties where there is available data for 2019, the average consideration was positive. A 67.9% of those in Kirinyaga, Makueni and Uasin Gishu said on average roads had improved since devolution. This was the majority opinion in each county, although Uasin Gishu (80.2%) residents were more supportive of that affirmation than those in Kirinyaga (53.7%) (Mitullah, 2016) (Opalo, 2020).

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Another of devolution's main aims was to bring politics closer to the people. All 47 County Governments have adopted public participation and civic education guidelines in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (Ngigi & Busolo, 2019). Despite this step forward, there is still a long way to go.

A 58% of respondents to an Afrobarometer survey in 2014 said they were not at all satisfied with public participation at their county, whilst only a 26% had a favorable opinion (Mitullah, 2016).

Although half of the people interviewed said they did have an interest in public affairs and a third had an active

participation in community groups, only a 14% of respondents admitted to have attended at least one county government meeting in the first year of devolution. However, a 73% of those who hadn't done so, showed interest in doing so if they had the chance, whilst a mere 12% expressed no interest in getting involved (Mitullah, 2016).

By 2019, participation had doubled on average, in the three counties where there is data, up to 31.6%. This figure was raised thanks to high numbers in Makueni County, where almost half of their population has attended a county forum once, more than twice than Uasin Gishu (27.6%) and Kirinyaga (20.1%). This indicates that citizens whose ethnic group is not represented in the national government participate more in public affairs than those co-ethnic with the central government (Opalo, 2020).

The dissatisfaction stems from the difficulty to engage in decision-making, which hasn't improved significantly throughout the years. An 81% of respondents answered that they felt it difficult to influence policies in 2014 nationwide, whilst a 72% considered the same on average on the three counties for which there is data of public participation in 2019. A similar situation is reported on access to county information, with a 78% nationwide regarding it difficult to get on hold of local plans in 2014 and a 68% with the same opinion five years later across Kirinyaga, Makueni and Uasin Gishu. (Mitullah, 2016) (Opalo, 2020).

This comes in line with complaints by civil society groups of a lack of true participation, arguing that county governments merely bring in citizens to approve previously decided legislation (El Messnaoui et. al., 2018). The available data shows there is interest in county affairs, but a decade after the approval of devolution, it is still difficult for citizens to participate in decision-making at the local level. However, those with an active interest in public is-

sues are less likely to say it is difficult to find county information and influence decision-making. This suggests that the difficulty to participate may be more perceived than real, influenced by a genuine lack of interest in local governance.

## **NATIONAL UNITY**

Devolution's main aim in the long run is to create a sense of national unity amongst Kenyans. Some scholars argue that empowering local leaders is vital to create a set of shared values that bring citizens together in culturally diverse societies (Hope, 2014). In countries where ethnicity is salient in politics such as in Kenya, tensions around the presidential election are high, as they are the only way to access state resources. The introduction of local powers seeks to reduce such disputes. A 56% of citizens believe devolution has decreased the possibility of election-related violence across Kenya, with the exception of the former Nyanza province (Burbidge, 2019). Overall, citizens agree that political cooperation works in the benefit of the nation. A 78.3% of Kenyans agree that the 2019 handshake between president Kenyatta and opposition leader Odinga is good for national unity, with a 53.2% strongly in favour of the agreement ((Mittullah & Oyuke, 2020).

Reducing tensions around elections helps to heal divisions between ethnic groups and unite the country. Results from Burbidge's nationwide survey shows that two thirds of citizens believe devolution has made them feel more Kenyan, persistent across all regions. Moreover, those interviewed also believe it is uniting the country, with the exception of those living in the former Western province (Burbidge, 2019). This is consistent with the findings of an Afrobarometer survey, which found that 90% of Kenyans feel at least as Kenyan as part of their ethnic group, whilst a 54% said they even feel more Kenyan that identified by their local community, a percentage which has increased in three points since the start of devolution. On the other side, only a 9% feel only part of their ethnic group. (Moosa, 2018).

Most remarkably, devolution has not only made citizens feel more Kenyan, but also more attached to their ethnic identity. A 46% of Kenyans feel more identified with their community than before decentralization (Burbidge, 2019). This is a groundbreaking result, as Kenyan politicians had historically ought to hide communal sentiment pursuing a national identity. Finding that devolution is helping Kenyans feel closer both to their nation and their ethnicity shows that recognising diversity is not at odds with sharing a common identity and that decentralization works better than centralization in uniting Kenyans.

## **OVERALL SUPPORT**

Popular support for devolution is strong. The latest nation-wide Ipsos poll shows that 84% of Kenyans back decentralization. This is the highest ever recorder by the organization, which has been listing support since November 2014. In its first year, support was at 69%, whilst just before the end of the first term of county governments in 2017 it was at 73%. The second local elections boosted support towards devolution by nine points. (Ipsos, 2018).

There are slight differences across political preferences. Those opposed to president Kenyatta's party support regional governments up to three points more than those in his favor. This is reflected by regions. Devolution's support is higher in areas traditionally excluded from national power such as the Coast (90%) and Nyanza (88%), a Luo stronghold, and Eastern provinces (85%). On the other hand, it is lower in regions historically tied to national government such as the Rift Valley, with a Kalenjin majority, Nairobi (82%) and Central provinces (82%), with a dominant Kikuyu population (Ipsos, 2018). This is consistent with data from Opalo's survey across three ethnically diverse counties. Support records a low 50.3% in Kirinyaga County in Central Kenya and peaks at Makueni County in the east with a 89.3% .

Moreover, a majority of Kenyans also support a revised version of the 2010 Constitution which provides for increased funding for counties. A 47% of Kenyans are in favour of the Building Bridges Initiative (BBI) draft. The proposed new version of the constitution will include clauses to eliminate duplicities and raise funding for counties from the current 15% to a minimum 35% of national revenue (Government of Kenya, 2019). Support for this change is specially higher in historically neglected regions such as Northeastern Kenya, with an 83% of positive opinions, whilst Central counties show the biggest refusal, with a 60% of contrary views (IRS, 2020).

The overall high support towards devolution translates into popular county governors, which are favoured for national politics. Almost two thirds of Kenyans want a generational change and would like local politicians to step up to the national arena in the upcoming 2022 elections. The four best rated governors are also amongst the ten most popular presidential candidates. Machakos governor Alfred Mutua stands out as the preferred regional leader with a 27% of votes and the third ideal president with an 8% of support, just behind vice-president Ruto with a 30% and opposition leader Odinga with a 17%.

The support for county governors for the presidency shows that devolution is not only changing regional politics but also the national sphere. The exposure of their good work is opening a path for local leaders to compete against traditional candidates from family dynasties such as the Kenyattas and Odingas.

In order to understand some of its flaws, one has to look into devolution's design and how it has worked against its own goals and effectiveness. There have been three main factors that have set constraints to devolution's success: the lack of power given to counties on decisive

## **5. CONSTRAINTS AND FUTURE PATHS**

competences; the limited financing, and finally the decision to divide the country into 47 mono-ethnic counties.

### **COMPETENCES**

Under the 2010 Constitution the national government kept power on key elements such as education, security and land ownership. Land has been a central theme in

Kenya ever since colonial occupation, as authorities took control of the most fertile crops and displaced the natives living in them. After independence, Kenyatta won and refused to give back the land to its original owners and instead shared its control with those in power (Cheeseman et.al., 2020). This has placed Kenya amongst the leading countries in land inequality in Africa and has been one of the main causes for election-related violence, as citizens demanded to have their land back (Boone et.al., 2019) (Chome, 2015).

Although many expected the new constitution to devolve land policy, instead it went into a new National Land Commission, an independent agency tasked with managing land issues. It was seen as the only way of de-politicizing and de-ethnicizing property rights. However, this lasted shortly. In 2016 the Lands Act returned power to the central government of many of the competences given to the new agency (Boone et.al., 2016).

But land hasn't been the only discussed matter. Certain county governments have demanded security competences, claiming they would provide better protection for its citizens. This has been specially relevant in northeastern Kenya, where porous borders with Somalia have allowed for the incursion of the Al-Shabaab terrorist group. Again, the national government has refused

### **SUPPORT FOR DEVOLUTION IS HIGHER IN PERIPHERIAL AREAS AND IN MINORITY COMMUNITIES**

to devolve such powers amid fears that local officials could use the security apparatus to manipulate elections and stoke inter-ethnic tensions (Burbidge, 2019).

## **FINANCING**

A second matter of discussion has been the finance received by the newly created counties. The 2010 Constitution states that at least a 15% of the national government revenue will go to the new tier of government. This is five times as much as previous local authorities received in the centralized system, but responsibilities and costs have also increased (Rocaboy et.al, 2013).

Moreover, county governments have a limited capacity to raise revenues by themselves. National government remains in control of key fiscal revenue sources such as income tax, customs tax, excise tax and value added tax. Only property and entertainment taxes, as well as parking and other fees have been devolved, making counties financially dependant on national government (Rocaboy et.al., 2013) (Cheeseman et.al., 2016).

Financing has been a major issue through the first years of devolution. Governors have continuously complained that they don't have enough money to cover the competences and deliver services tasked in devolution. Whilst the BBI draft has been welcomed by the Council of Governors, who see their longtime demands met, it doesn't provide for additional tools for raising money at the regional level (Mueni, 2019) (PTBBUA, 2019).

## **TERRITORIAL DIVISION**

The 2010 Constitution eliminated the administrative organization into seven provinces plus Nairobi which existed previous to devolution, promoting the districts created initially during British occupation. This design has produced practically mono-ethnic mini-states, a situation that goes against the country's initial aim of prohibiting ethnically based political parties and requiring governments to be ethnically diverse (Cornell & D'Arcy,

2016). 40 counties have more than 75% of its population of one community, of which 11 have a 95% of people from the same ethnic group. On the other hand, only 7 counties have a fairly evenly shared population, with no group accounting for more than 50% of the total population (Burbidge, 2019).

This has produced unwilling effects which work against national unity. The new model has fostered ethnic majoritarianism, leading to a sense of entitlement of county issues by dominant communities and fears of restriction of freedom of movement across the country (Chome, 2015) (Burbidge, 2019). Furthermore, self-rule can revive long-lasting secessionist challenges. The Somali population in Kenya, distributed amongst the current Garissa, Mandera and Wajir counties, has claimed independence for decades, a demand which has increased by a lack of state presence in their home areas (Burbidge, 2019). If devolution works, local politicians can claim they would be better off as an independent state.

## **THE FUTURE OF DEVOLUTION**

The success or failure of devolution will depend on the people's and politician's willingness. The Konrad Adenauer Stiftung envisions four different scenarios. In the best-case one, both citizens and leader support devolution, whose health is strong a 'roaring lion'. A second possibility is that it turns into 'an abandoned buffalo', where politicians leave it aside but citizens continue supporting it, as it brings development to their home areas. A third possibility draws on the contrary, a 'white elephant' devolution model supported by the elite but not by the population. The worst possible future would be a 'dying rhino' scenario, where devolution is not supported by politicians nor the public (Tödtling et.al., 2018).

At its start in 2013, a nationwide poll showed that 51,8% of Kenyans believed the national government supported

devolution (TI Kenya, 2013). A decade after the 2010 Constitution, devolution has established as a 'roaring lion', with politicians supporting an extension of resources to counties and people supporting all across the country the county system.



## 6. CONCLUSION

**K**enya is a country that impresses you the moment you step into it. With its welcoming nature and huge human capital, its people make this region feel a second home. Researching on the country helps to understand what is the best way for this country to move forward. In this sense, devolution has been the biggest change in Kenyan politics since independence.

After 37 years of unitary state, Kenya has gone back to its roots and emulated a system similar to that of its first independent Constitution. As of today, it is the longest and most stable project of decentralization ever experienced in Kenya. A decade after the signing of the 2010 Constitution and seven years and two mandates into local government, its functioning and support must be reviewed.

This paper presents a broad framework of how devolution has changed Kenya. By looking at the social, economic and political impact, the paper intends to understand if it is working in favor of citizens and, most importantly, satisfying their needs. After outlining the country's history with decentralization and the objectives introduced in the current project, the paper shows how local competences have developed. Health, infrastructure and agriculture data show that decentralization has improved service delivery and effectiveness on a general scale. However, big differences emerge between counties. Despite its objective to work in favor of minorities, the most benefitted population are part of the five biggest ethnic groups, where the most health personnel, paved roads and fertile lands are. This can also be seen in the GCP growth of counties, which is bigger amongst those with large agricultural production. This policy has benefited big communities instead of focusing on irrigation for the arid lands, majority across north and east Kenya where smaller ethnic groups live.

The benefit for the majority groups can also be seen in politics. Whilst devolution has democratized power, it

has also worked against minorities. Up to 12 governors outside the five largest ethnic groups reached power in 18 counties, but at the same time the new system has left out up to 2.9 million Kenyans. These either don't live in a county where its group is a majority or simply don't belong to a community which is the largest in any county. This has caused a paradox: by trying to open institutions to minorities, it has caused a double marginalization for some of them.

Overall, satisfaction with devolution is high amongst Kenyans. Despite progress being made at different pace across the country, citizens generally appreciate the benefits of decentralization over power being held solely from Nairobi. Its popularity together with the provisions made in the BBI report to increase funding to counties suggest devolution is in good health.

The evidence shown in this paper raises several questions that call for further research. First of all, both the Government of Kenya and county governments should offer further data disaggregated per counties. The Gross County Product 2019 report by the Kenyan National Bureau of Statistics is a positive first step, but it should be complemented with a nationwide poll over the years on citizen's perceptions on devolution. This could include questions on participation, perceptions on national unity and ethnic sentiment as well as people's opinions on county governors and national government. Respondents should be required to state their age, gender, ethnic identity and occupation to differentiate support per segments of population.



Devolution was designed to bring development to all the country. That's why it is vital to know people's opinions

on the project and how it is affecting their personal lives. Further research could help understand who is benefiting more from devolution and who is more pleased with it, trying to see if both match and if this couples with ethnic belonging. This is important to understand if devolution works for the majority and meets its objective of promoting minorities. For the upcoming future, researchers must keep an eye on the development of BBI to assess how decentralization moves

forward. Gathering disaggregated data on service delivery and economic outcomes together with citizens perception would help researchers cross information and analyze devolution with precision. In the meantime, available research sheds light on support by counties and helps to know if devolution is the best way of development for all Kenyans.



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