

## **A Critical Analysis of the Concept Majimbo in Kenya's Political Circle**

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### **Abstract**

*At independence, the concept Majimbo became relevant in Kenya's political sphere. Since then the concept has developed to an extent that today it determines the political atmosphere of the country during election. It has been noted that every time the term Majimbo surfaces in political campaigns, violence is detected. This paper takes a critical analysis of the meaning and usage of the concept Majimbo during elections in Kenya. Both the logical and enclopedic meaning of the concept has been discussed. Logically the concept is associated with regionalism, whereas enclopedically it has varied meanings depending on the politics of the day. Relevance theory has been used to explain the relevance of Majimbo and the varied interpretations that the electorates held especially during election.*

**Keywords:** *Majimbo, Ugatuzi, Cognitive environment, cognitive effects, ostensive stimulus, Conceptual interpretations, and manipulation.*

### **1. Background**

In the past, Kenya has had contentions about the correct system of governance. Before independence, the colonialists used the divide and rule system, a system that divided the country into regions. At the onset of colonial struggle, the main objective of many political parties was to fight for the independence of their people. For instance, the Mau Mau was an entity for the Kikuyu and their main objective was to reclaim land that had been grabbed by colonialists. As the struggle for independence advanced, the consciousness for unity arose, and leaders from the five main regions that is, Coast, Central, Western, Nyanza, and Rift Valley province sought to deliberate on the kind of political governance that was suitable. Wrangles between two political factions, namely KANU<sup>1</sup> and KADU<sup>2</sup> emerged, with each side supporting different ideologies. The proponents of *Majimbo* (regionalism) included: Masinde Muliro and Oginga Odinga (Nyanza-Western Province), Ronald Ngala (Coast Province) and Daniel Moi (Rift Valley province). The KANU faction led by Jomo Kenyatta supported a centralized (Unitary) governance system.

Though the KANU government won the support of the majority of the people and formed a centralized government, the KADU supporters did not last long in the government. Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, later formed an opposition party, which demanded the change of the political system. Though not so conceivable at the time, the concept of *Majimbo* advanced more during the Moi regime, and subsequent opposition parties were formed during the introduction of multiparty in 1991. Again the society became conscious of *Majimbo* as started by the late Jaramogi Oginga Odinga. Though other proponents like Moi remained perpetrators of the Unitarism<sup>3</sup>, the growing demand for change to *Majimboism* emerged in 2002. In the 2007 general elections, the debate for *Majimbo* versus Unitarism was revisited, this time by the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) who were the opposition and Party of National Unity (PNU) which was the ruling party. New meanings were acquired on the concept, and the campaigning period was marred with definitions, explanations, debates on what *Majimbo* is and what it was not.

Both parties used *Majimbo* to influence the electorates. Voting trends were influenced, reactions before and after symbolized the cognitive effect of the use of the concept. There was violence and death.

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<sup>1</sup> Kenya African National Union- the party that led Kenya to independence in 1963.

<sup>2</sup> Kenya African Democratic Union- the party at proposed *Majimbo* prior to independence

<sup>3</sup> Oxford Dictionary (2005:1614) a country or organization consisting of a number of areas or groups that are joined together and are controlled by one government or group: a single unitary state.

In this paper, our main concern is the meaning of *Majimbo* and its various interpretations by the electorate. The paper has analyzed the background of *Majimbo* since independence and how this concept has been linguistically constructed to suit political demands during election.

## 2. Theoretical Consideration

Relevance theory has been used as the framework of analysis. Sperber and Wilson (1995) founded this theory on the basis of Grice's theory of Conversational Implicature (Grice, 1975). The theory has three major concepts: cognition, communication and comprehension. The three concepts of have been used to analyze the interpretation of the concept *Majimbo* as used during the 2007 elections.

The Oxford Dictionary (2005) defines relevance as an activation of thought that is worthwhile thinking or talking about. It also means something or somebody connected with the subject you are thinking about. Therefore, we can talk about a relevant suggestion, question, point or experience. Sperber and Wilson's proposal of the relevance theory sought to explain the communication between the speaker and the hearer and what happens in the mind of the speaker and hearer during the communication process.

Sperber and Wilson (2004) state that: "That any utterance addressed to someone automatically conveys the presumption of its own optimal relevance." An act of communication quietly makes manifestations of the intentions of communication both to the speakers and the hearer. In this theory Sperber and Wilson, define relevance as relative depending upon the state of knowledge of a hearer when they come across an utterance. Though it is not always easy to tell the state of a hearer, this theory has successfully explained the influence of the use of the concept *Majimbo* on the electorates.

Sperber and Wilson (2004) postulate that relevance is based on Grice's major claim that utterances made by the speaker usually create expectations which lead the hearer's effort to process the speaker's meaning. Grice described these expectations in terms of the Co-operative Principle and maxims. I.e. maxims of Quality (truthfulness), Quantity (informativeness), Relation (relevance), and Manner (clarity) which speakers are expected to observe.

Relevance theory offers a cognitive approach towards the understanding of human language and communication. For instance, when hearers get information in a political rally or from the television at home, they interpret the meaning of the information by making inferences. In this regard, Relevance theory inferentially explains how the hearer infers the speakers' meaning on the basis of the evidence provided. One of the major concerns is; how then can we tell what the hearer has inferred?

In the case of Kenya, the aftermath of the general election was violence. More evident was the eviction of people of a certain tribe from areas which opposed either of the two political parties- ODM and PNU. The kikuyu people were displaced from regions supporting ODM, whereas other tribes such as the Kalenjin and the Luo were displaced from regions that supported PNU. Tribal cleansing<sup>4</sup> was also witnessed. It can be argued that what influenced such actions was the use of verbal responses and actions of the electorates during and after the election period.

In relevance theory, inferences depend on the context of communication. When the hearer gets the information, he/she infers the speaker's intention by considering the context of the information he/she has.

The speaker in this case is occupied with making the hearer understand clearly the meaning of his utterances. However, because the human mind may have all sorts of information, there is a chance that the hearer may fail to find the context of the speaker's information for him to effectively understand the meaning of the utterances of the speaker. Thus, relevance theory postulates that by way of relevance, or using relevance as the guiding principle, the hearer gets to infer the correct meaning of the speaker's information and linking this to the context of the speaker. This ability to use relevance to infer the meaning of the speaker's information is considered in this paper.

Relevance theory also states that the degree of relevance of any new information is determined by the cognitive effect it will have on the hearer and the cognitive effort the hearer will make in processing that information. In this case, the effect may be strengthening, eliminating or weakening of old assumptions or simply forming new information. (Sperber and Wilson 2004:3). In this case, the use of *Majimbo* strengthened the old assumptions of the meaning of this concept.

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<sup>4</sup> Violent attacks and killings of people from certain tribes for economic or political reasons

### 3. Data presentation and Analysis

The data was sampled from media advertisements of PNU and ODM during the 2007 general elections campaign period and experiences based on the observation of the researcher. The political situation at the time of this paper made it easy to obtain the targeted data. Adverts and text excerpts from the newspapers were selected and analyzed to discuss the meaning of the concept *Majimbo*.

### 4. The Definition of *Majimbo*

#### 4.1 The logical definition of *Majimbo*

According to the relevance theory in Sperber & Wilson (1995:73) a logical form must be well formed, and semantically complete. It must also represent the state of affairs, in either the actual world or possible world. The mind of a hearer makes logical forms relevant by way of constructing, storing and even entertaining in different ways the logical forms they encounter. When a particular logical entry is made in an individual's mind, the relevance of this concept to the individual will lead to the storage of the entry, but if the form is irrelevant or fails to concur with the individual's assumptions (contradicts without convincing), then the entry is stored only temporarily and eventually deleted from the mind almost immediately.

Sperber & Wilson (1995:71) support the above by stating that concepts must have logical properties, which comply or contradict with the individual's assumptions. It must be understood that hearers have assumptions prior to receiving any information and when this information is received, the human brain processes it in order to decode meaning.

In order to find a basis for definition of *Majimbo*, this paper makes an assumption that *Majimbo* is the plural term for *Jimbo*. The dictionary defines *Jimbo* (singular) as a province, tract, constituency, or diocese. *Majimbo* as a word is not found in the common English dictionary, neither is it found in the Kamusi Ya Kiswahili-Kiingereza (2001). The term *Ugatuzi*, a preferred version (as used by ODM) of *Majimbo* is also not found in the Kiswahili dictionary. ODM calls *Majimbo*, *Ugatuzi* which in their definition means federalism.

The Kamusi ya Kiswahili Sanifu (2006) defines jimbo as, "sehemu ya nchi, iliyo kubwa kuliko wilaya ambayo mkuu wake huteuliwa na kiongozi wa nchi, mkoa".

Translated as: a section of a country that is bigger than a District which its leader is appointed by the president of the country or province.

In the same dictionary, the second definition says jimbo is, "wilaya au sehemu ya wilaya yenye mbunge wa kuwakilisha watu wa eneo hilo bungeni: la uchaguzi."

Translated as:

a district or part of a district which has a representative that represent the people in parliament. Based on the above definition *Majimbo* is deduced to have four logical meanings: it is a system of political and economic independence of region other than the unitary system of governance; it is a system where power is shared from central government to districts (jimbo)<sup>5</sup> and; it is a constituency represented in parliament by Mjumbe<sup>6</sup>. In Daily Nation advert: Nov 14, (2007:22), both ODM and PNU used the terms "federalism", "devolution" and "regionalism" to define *Majimbo*. Oxford Dictionary (2005: 539) defines the term **federalism** as a system of government in which the individual state of a country has control over their own affairs. It is also controlled by a central government for national decision. In the same dictionary, **Devolution** means the act of giving power from a central authority or government to an authority or a government in a local region. **Regionalism** (ibid) means the desire of the people who live in a particular region of country to have more political and economic independence.

#### 4.2 The Encyclopedic definition of *Majimbo*

The encyclopedic meaning is based on what we think the words mean. Relevance theory, states that there are pragmatic interpretations we make of words or concepts we encounter, i.e. we come up with implicatures for this words. In most cases, the implicatures bear meanings that are broadened, narrowed, or approximated. In narrowing of the meaning, we find a specific sense of a concept than the encoded one; in broadening, we get the general sense of a concept or word than the encoded one; in approximation, we get the marginally extended meaning that falls out of the concept's linguistically-specific denotation.

<sup>5</sup> Derived from Swahili singular form of *Majimbo*. By adding the plural suffix [-s], it means the plural word for regions.

<sup>6</sup> Member of Parliament representing a Jimbo/constituency.

The meanings derived are usually numerous depending on the hearer's assumptions. Wilson D \_\_\_:2-3). The encyclopedic meaning of the concept is as follows:

#### 4.2.1 *Majimbo* in 1963-64

At independence leadership wrangles between two political factions, namely KANU<sup>7</sup> and KADU<sup>8</sup> emerged over the system of governance to be used in Kenya. Its proponents included: Masinde Muliro and Oginga Odinga (Nyanza-Western Province), Ronald Ngala (Coast Province) and Daniel Moi (Rift Valley province). The KANU faction who Ngunyi (1996:85) calls the unitarists led by Jomo Kenyatta at the time had the backing of the major ethnic communities and proposed a central government. KADU on the other side, which had political support from the colonialists, fronted regionalism/*Majimbo*ism. This was the first time *Majimbo* as a concept was proposed by Africans in Kenya. Though the KANU government won the support of the majority of the people and formed a centralized government, the KADU supporters did not last long in the government. Most of them became opposers of the central government system. For instance Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, later formed an opposition party, though other proponents like Moi remained perpetrators of unitarism<sup>9</sup>. During this period *Majimbo* meant regionalism, a system of ruling where each region had a representative in the central government.

#### 4.2.2 *Majimbo* in 1972

According to Ngunyi (1996:185), *Majimbo* in this period aimed at: ...deconstruction of the unitary state...

It was a struggle for GEMA<sup>10</sup> personalities and colonialists (who were already ousted) to remain in power and protect their political, social, and economic interests. The use of the term *Majimbo* and its popularity as a concept was to see the expulsion of the Kikuyu from Rift Valley, who had settled there after independence. This threat came as result of the post independence rivalry between KANU and KADU, derived from the manner in which their communities interacted with the settlers' Agrarian Capital Land Policy. It was clear that leaders of KANU came from central province whereas those of KADU came from the rest of the regions in Kenya i.e. coast, western, rift valley. At the same time, the Land Freedom Army (LFA) was formed by Kikuyu peasants, an army that was politically supported to protect their eviction from Rift Valley. Eventually, the eviction did not occur.

Later, land ownership started being tribal. The Swynnerton Plan of 1954 offers a basis on which the settlement by the Kikuyu was made in Rift Valley. The plan stated that African Commercial Agriculture was legitimized and the settler's acceptance of the possibility that land would be relinquished to black Africans. The migrations saw people move into Rift Valley not as labourers or squatters but as land owners through the purchase of sub-divided European farms. Over the years, more and more settlements were made without mandate from the local people and against the wish of other leaders formerly of KADU, hence the dissatisfaction and the magnitude of politics played by leaders seeking public office always tied *Majimbo* to land, threatening to evict those who do not belong to their tribe.

#### 4.2.3 *Majimbo* in 1991 and 1992

In 1992, during the Moi Regime and KANU as the ruling party; being the year of general elections in Kenya, *Majimbo* re-emerged. Ngunyi (1996) refers to *Majimbo* of this period as Neo-*Majimbo*. This time round the *Majimbo* meant expulsion of not only Kikuyu's from the Rift Valley, but also all ethnic communities supporting the political opposition (any other party apart from KANU). These included the Luo, the Abagusii and the Abaluhya who comprised of 46% population in the Rift Valley. In this period, the new meaning of *Majimbo* emerged with a denotation of 'eviction' of 'invaders' from land. The 'invaders' in this case are anybody who did not belong to the native land they occupied and also one who did not support KANU as a political party. That was in April 1992. According to the Christian Science Monitor, between late 1991 and December 1992, when Kenya held its first multiparty elections in more than two decades, at least 1,000 people were killed and 200,000 displaced in the worst ethnic violence since independence from Britain in 1963.

<sup>7</sup> Kenya African National Union- the party that led Kenya to independence in 1963.

<sup>8</sup> Kenya African Democratic Union- the party at proposed *Majimbo* prior to independence

<sup>9</sup> Oxford Dictionary (2005:1614) a country or organization consisting of a number of areas or groups that are joined together and are controlled by one government or group: a single unitary state.

<sup>10</sup> Gikiyu Embu Meru Association- a group that was formed at the beginning of independence by the three tribes for economic and political reasons.

The Human Rights Watch, documented that Politicians in the Rift Valley and the coast incited and organized groups against 'outsiders', mostly Kikuyu, Luo, Luhya, and Kisii migrants who had migrated to these regions seeking land and jobs. The local politicians feared that these people would not vote for them in the ethnicized politics of Kenya. It is estimated that thousands died and hundreds of thousands were displaced. This is attributed to the inflammatory statements in support of the chauvinistic interpretation of *majimboism* that led to the ethnically-based violence.

#### **4.2.4 *Majimbo* in 2007**

In 2007 general election, the debate on *Majimbo* emerged yet again. Both ODM and PNU had different ways of defining it, thus packaging it in a way that would elicit acceptance or rejection. Each political party released the importance of this concept in the political space; therefore it formed the major part of their manifesto. The rivalry between KANU and KADU over *Majimbo* re-emerged with ODM and PNU renaming and reconstructing the term. For ODM, *Majimbo* was a system that would ensure equal distribution of resources and delegating power from the central government to the regions. PNU on the other hand, countered propositions of ODM citing that it was a concept meant to encourage tribalism and violence.

In this contest the expectations of the people/supporters of both parties were so high each finding *Majimbo* as either the best or worst system. After the elections, expectations of a new government did not materialized for ODM supporters, thus regions that were strongholds of ODM, notably the Rift Valley, turned on the Kikuyu tribe evicting them from their land and burning their property. In PNU strongholds notably, Naivasha people of different ethnic background from Kikuyu were also evicted and butchered. Over 300,000 people were displaced and an estimated 1000 killed.

According to PNU *Majimbo* was not the best system of governance, for this reason they packaged the concept negatively.

In the Daily Nation (Nov. 2007), an advert posted by a PNU supporter gives 5 key arguments against *Majimbo*.

1. It's a Bilious re-tribalisation and inflammation of communal pro-activities.
2. It's only the last preference when all other options of accommodation fail. Good examples being Iraq (a nation bedeviled with war) and U.S.A (which was large and divided due to different colonists who colonized it).
3. It's expensive for the tax payer.
4. *Majimbo* will offer a feeding trough for political god fathers.
5. *Majimbo* was only used by U.S.A to induce the colonies to come together under one roof after colonization.
6. It's expensive and will become a burden on the national purse.
7. It will create uni-tribal regions- jimbos.

In this advert, *Majimbo* is defined as a concept that would disintegrate the country. It is cited to mean tribalism, an expensive system, an inflator of violence and a last solution only used by collapsed states such as Iraq.

The ODM party gave a positive aspect of the concept. ODM advertisements aimed at educating their supporters on the meaning on the concept.

In the Daily Nation, Nov. 2, 2007: 32-33, they define *Majimbo* according to what their party believes it means. In this article named "the Seven Big Lies our opponents tell you about Us", ODM analyses *Majimbo* as follows:

1. It is a federal system as proposed in the Bomas Draft Constitution<sup>11</sup> of Kenya Review Commission prior to the 2005 Referendum. They cite: The devolved government of the Bomas Draft is a new plan and it is very, very different from the *Majimbo* of the 1960's.
2. It means to empower people of different backgrounds with resources to develop and instill nationhood. It does not mean eviction of people from where they live to their ancestral homelands.
3. The 2007 *Majimbo* was one proposed by the Bomas Draft Constitution different from that of 1960's which was tried and failed.
4. *Majimbo* means a devolved government, different from federalism of states like USA.
5. *Majimbo* is *Ugatuji*.

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<sup>11</sup> A Commission appointed by Kibaki to review the constitution of Kenya.

From the above definitions, ODM defines *Majimbo* as a federal system proposed in the Bomas Draft, (ibid: 1). They also stated that it means devolution where the power or resources are distributed from the central government to the regions similar to the USA kind of government system. Though ODM pointed that their *Majimbo* is not similar to that of US but to the South Africa, some similarities are very evident between the two. The US federalism means a division of governmental powers between the national and state governments where state governments, are independent in socio-economic and political issues but are not allowed to contradict federal statutes stipulated in the supreme law of the constitution. The similarity here is the existence of regions that elect representatives to parliament.

To further their definition, ODM called their *Majimbo ugatuzi*, which according to their manifesto is a Swahili word for *usambazaji wa raslimali*<sup>12</sup> or *usambazaji wa mamlaka*<sup>13</sup>. They explained that *Ugatuzi* is a system where the central government will exist but will only create laws that govern the country. Regional governments, which they called *jimbos* would formulate policies that suit their region, and set standards in regional planning i.e. programmes across the districts in the region, monitor and implement projects, obtain and provide technical assistance and harmonize operations. The *jimbos* would operate within the central government and funds that will implement projects will also come from there.

According to ODM, *Ugatuzi* is a concept that was supposed to ensure equal distribution of resources such that poor regions would be developed to the level of other regions. The whole country would prosper instead of a few selected regions.

ODM's *Ugatuzi* government was to have two houses in parliament just like UK (House of Commons and the House of Lords) and the USA (the Senate and Congress) where the National Assembly (made of MPS) and the Senate (one member from each District, two women-from each region and 10 members represent the marginalized groups and speaker of the house).

The *Ugatuzi* would remove the possibility for patronage and favouritism that prevented equal distribution of development. They equate their Kenyan proposed *Ugatuzi* to that of South Africa where resource are distributed according to the needs of people. They also added that their *Ugatuzi* will not confine people to their regions rather government institutions will be decentralized to give easy and convenient access to reach the people.

#### 4.2.5 Other meanings of *Majimbo*

During the 2007 election period ODM described *Majimbo* as totally different from that of the US and other countries and only equated it to the federal system of South Africa. However the explanation and definition of their *Majimbo* insinuates that *Majimbo* is an incorporation of borrowed systems of federal governments from USA, UK and South Africa.

On the other hand PNU defines it as a system of government that devolves development in terms of funds to other regions. According to PNU this already exists as the government had CDF<sup>14</sup> and LATF<sup>15</sup> on the ground. We have also seen that PNU packages *Majimbo* with a tribal notion, fearing that it is a concept that would cause tribal division and eviction of people from their land.

Kagwanja and Mutunga (2001) agree with PNU at one level that *Majimbo* as a concept is associated with fear and uncertainty bearing the fact that it has been historically associated with violence and land evictions. At another level they agree with ODM that it is an option for equitable distribution of resources to minorities who seem to be overlooked by the ruling majority. *Majimboism* has its sinister ring and a shade of blood. In many Kenyan minds, it is twined with what both national and international human rights watchdogs have unmasked as politically-sponsored ethnic cleansing, indeed genocide, in the Rift Valley, Western, Nyanza and Coast provinces. Politically-inspired violence killed and displaced thousands of Kenyans from their homes, destroyed property, brought local economies to their knees, made children destitute and assaulted citizenship and nationhood" (The Nation May 20, 2001).

In this sense, Kagwanja and Mutunga (2001) imply that *Majimbo* has become a political propaganda leading to chaos in the history of Kenya.

<sup>12</sup> Devolution of resources

<sup>13</sup> Devolution of power.

<sup>14</sup> Constitutional Development Fund

<sup>15</sup> Local Authority Transfer Fund

It is a notion that suggests violence and displacement of people from land. It is also attributed to horrid memories of chaos experienced in the past, as explained by Ngunyi. It would be important to note that from the above, the logical entry of *Majimbo* which is highly thought to be federalism; has nothing to do with violence. It is this logical entry of the concept that was altered to suit political interests. For example, those who understand *Majimbo* as proposed by the KADU<sup>16</sup> faction at the beginning of independence in 1963 interpreted it as a concept aimed at dividing people on lines of tribes. The same concept was also supported by the British colonialists who wanted a federal system of government, in order to maintain the status quo at the time of independence. They had dominated areas around central province and Nairobi and they sought an easy way of “not sharing” their socio-economic domination with other Kenyans.

Ngunyi (1995) observes that this was supported by the people of central province at the time. Ngunyi also explains another form of *Majimbo*-the *Majimbo* of 1991 that aimed at fishing out tribes that voted for opposition from Rift Valley. In another instance, the election of 1997<sup>17</sup> violence broke out at the Likoni area of Coast Province where Wabara<sup>18</sup> were killed and displaced. *Majimbo* as a concept popularized by political contestants at the time played a big role in these violence. In the recent 2007 general election, the tribal based killings were repeated at higher magnitude. Various tribal communities majority of especially the Kikuyu, were displaced from areas they did not ‘belong’, because Kibaki the incumbent president, had ascended to power on allegations of vote rigging. From another angle, a tribal notion based on leadership and distribution of resources is seen as *Majimbo*. Morton, a biographer of the former head of state Daniel arap Moi says that *Majimbo* is a system of checks and balances designed to safeguard the integrity of small tribes which were in danger of being overwhelmed by larger tribes, particularly the Kikuyu. Morton, (1998:108).

In this definition the fearsome nature of the concept *Majimbo* is explained, since it echoes the fact that with *Majimbo*, small tribes are safe from the socio-economic and political dominance of the larger tribes like the Kikuyu. Since independence, there have been two presidents who ruled Kenya: Mzee Jomo Kenyatta and Daniel arap Moi. As depicted by Ngunyi (2005) in both eras *Majimbo* as a concept elicited mixed reactions from the citizens. Its representation especially in election period led to people losing lives, property and land.

Querengesser (2007) defines the devolution or *Majimbo*, as strengthening of the feeling of inclusion as well as democracy and accountability. He provides an analysis of Canada’s devolution which means devolution of funds and resources equitably. (Daily Nation Nov 10, 2007:14). Though the main purpose of this article is to clarify the meaning of *Majimbo*, he gives an analysis of what devolution means in Canada against the backdrop of ‘confusion; of what *Majimbo* exactly means in the Kenyan situation. He quotes Lumumba who says that: “The word *Majimbo* should not be part of political debate at the time (of election) because it is understood to mean different things to different people, and thus it could be susceptible to becoming propaganda.”

In this article Lumumba defines *Majimbo* as people participating in democracy through grassroots government, rather than having it buried. He says that the Kenyan type of *Majimbo* is modeled to that of South Africa as stipulated in the Bomas Draft. Lumumba agrees with the definition of *Majimbo* by ODM, though his definition touches on ‘people’s grass roots governments’ which could mean people having government systems of their own at the grass root level and not an umbrella government nationwide.

It is evident that the reintroduction of the *Majimbo* during the 2007 general elections resulted to eviction of people from land and hundreds of deaths. It is also evident that even though both political parties defined *Majimbo*, their definition lacked concreteness. In ODM’s *Majimbo* the terms “devolution”, “federalism” with borrowed concepts from South Africa, US and UK. The definition of PNU refers to the historical effects the term has had on the country in terms of violence, death and displacement of people from their land and property. They also seem to suggest that “devolution” already exists especially with constituencies and local authorities that have funds to decide on what kind of development they would want to implement. This paper indeed, confirms the notion that *Majimbo* is a political concept used by candidates for public office for the purpose of maintaining or gaining leadership. This is so since the misunderstanding of voters as to what *Majimbo* actually means was manipulated.

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<sup>16</sup> Kenya Africa Democratic Union. This was the first party to propose the regionalism or *Majimbo* at independence. It was led by Masinde Muliro, Daniel Arap Moi,

<sup>17</sup> Kenya Human rights Commission Report: Killing the Vote, State Sponsored Violence and Flawed Elections in Kenya (1998:56).

<sup>18</sup> Upcountry people who speak alien dialects i.e. Luos, Luhyas, Kamba and Kikuyu.

## 5. Some Manipulative Mechanism that popularized the concept *Majimbo* in 2007

Several communicative strategies were employed by both political parties as manipulative mechanisms to package their agenda in reaching the public in a persuasive manner. This was done by way of language. Habwe (1989:64) says that, “the most important tool for any successful politician is the extent to which he manipulates his language to hold the attention of the audience...” Habwe agrees with the fact that politicians manipulate their audience by use of language, capturing their attention to focus on his or her agenda.

For instance, PNU’s most dominating subject during the period of November and December 2007, was to urge the public to shun “*Majimbo*” as a failed system of governance and to create awareness of the socio-economic gains of the Kibaki regime. They used slogans like *Kibaki Tena*, meaning Kibaki should be the president again and *Taifa Tekelezi* meaning “a working nation”.

ODM capitalized on the shortfalls of Kibaki’s regime and the need to change the country from a unitary state to a federal state to achieve equity in all aspects of life. They used slogans like: “*Chungwa Moja Maisha Bora*”, meaning: “One Orange Better Life.”, “One Dedicated Man”- referring to the presidential candidate Raila Odinga, “One Determined and Deserving Man”(Raila Odinga), ‘Vote for Real Change’ among others.

Majority of the statements used by both political parties were either lies, or half truths characterized with severe subjectivity. The politicians engaged several mechanisms to make this statements appeal to the public i.e. Colour, poetic language, songs, flashbacks, allusion among others. These are discussed as follows:

### 5.1 Colour

Colour is an important aspect of presentation of ideas. There are several categories of colour. We have warm colours such as red, green, orange and cool colours such as blue. The cool colours are receding while the warm colours stand out. Every organizations, institution and groups have symbols which represent them. They also have colours which they use to identify themselves. For instance the University of Nairobi institutional colour is Blue. That of Nairobi City Council is green.

Both ODM and PNU had party colours and symbols. ODM’s Party colour was orange, the colour of a natural ripe orange fruit. It is a bright and therefore very attractive to the eye. This colour also carries and represents the party’s name- Orange Democratic Movement. Most of ODM’s campaign items bore this colour. These include TV, radio and newspaper commercials and street billboards among others.

Manipulation of colours came in during TV and newspapers commercials, to discredit their opponents in one way or another. For instance it was common sight to see their opponent’s colour-Blue, used to give a negative impression of the opponents’ agenda. For instance, in Daily Nation (Nov 14, 2007:22) ODM elaborated the meaning of *Majimbo* by use of colours.

Example 1.

“Real change means  
A better life  
And better future for all Kenyans  
Fairness  
In all resource allocation and political power  
in the constitution.  
Development of infrastructure  
And therefore  
More jobs  
With real change together we  
Can build a better life for all.

REAL CHANGE FOR ALL KENYANS

From the above excerpt, the phrases “better life” and “fairness” are highlighted in blue. The PNU party colour is blue. This means that the two phrases are directed at PNU and the public to imply that the latter is “unfair” in its system of governance and has failed to offer ‘better life’ for all Kenyans. At the end of the excerpt “real “change” for all Kenyans” appears in the orange colour to cement the fact that ODM stands for “original” and not the adulterated change. In this advert Raila Odinga the leader of ODM appears next to this advert dressed in a blue suit and read tie, again symbolizing the party colours of PNU.



This in itself can be seen as a deliberate attempt to own the opposition party's ideas that they offered change and good life, yet what they offered was disunity and low quality life. In this kind of picture, Raila echoes his party's ability to offer better services.

## 5.2 Political flashbacks

When one wants to evoke fear and intimidation as forms of manipulation, flashbacks can play this role. Bloody pasts are always revisited to shame or save the face of politicians. For instance in the current 2008 United States presidential elections, the democratic nominations has been marred with 'dirty' politics that aim at manipulating Americans to reject any candidate associated with terrorists culture, by instilling fear that the September 11 terrorists bombing incident would recur if such candidates are elected. In one instance, the democrat presidential candidate Barrack Obama, was accused of upholding terrorists culture, when an old picture of his, which he took during a past visit to Kenya, dressed like a Rendille warrior-shuka, Islamic cap and a sword- was unraveled allegedly by his opponent Hillary Clinton and her campaign team. The intention of this was to portray him as an *Al-Qaeda*<sup>19</sup> supporter, since he dressed like a muslim.

Similarly, fear was used by both PNU and ODM to warn the electorates on the dangers of electing a 'bad' regime. They invoked past scenarios of violence and bloodshed in the country as a way of manipulation. For instance, one of the PNU's TV commercial in which the dreaded 1982 coup attempt on Moi, the former president, was revisited. On Sunday 1, August 1982, part of the air force mutinied and took over the country securing strategic sites in Nairobi- Jomo Kenyatta and Wilson Airport, General Post Office and Voice of Kenya media stations now called Kenya Broadcasting Cooperation. PNU played this advert at the time when the political context was discussing *Majimbo*. The PNU party warned the public supporters against electing a man-Raila Odinga- who allegedly led the coup attempt, as president.

Example 2

"Do you remember what happened in the 1982 coup?

Who did it?

Do you want it to happen again?..."

The presentation of the above statements is very appealing to the emotion of the viewers. The rhetoric questions used do not necessarily require answers but they evoked the viewers' emotions, who in turn revisit this horrible day and fear becomes part of their reasoning- that if we elect PNU's opponent's we are deemed to have a bloodshed in Kenya.

The relevance of the above advert is seen in the manner of presentation. The assumption of this advert strengthens what the hearer already knows about 1982. For supporters of ODM this assumption is weak since they do not see their party leader Raila Odinga as the coup attempt leader. However, the PNU supporter's assumptions are strengthened believing that he was the leader of the coup attempt. Sperber and Wilson (1995:119) say that the context effect is a necessity for relevance to be achieved. If the contextual effect is greater so is the relevance. The advert strikes a great contextual effect making it highly relevant to the hearer.

The manipulative nature of the above example is what Blass (2007) calls covert communication used in manipulation to hide the manipulative intention. In the above example, the communication is covert. It requires the audience to find the hidden meaning of the text. Hence the phrase: "do you remember what happened in 1982?" Of course, the audience knows that there was a day in this period that bombs and shoot-outs occurred. Many people were injured and hundreds died. But the communicator is not open; there is some degree of covertness. It is not as open as saying,

"In 1982 a coup happened and many people died, and our opponent Raila Odinga was the leader of the abortive coup attempt." By communicating in a covert way, the speaker expects the audience to derive an implicature that would be used to deduce the relevance of the utterance.

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<sup>19</sup> One of the most feared terrorist sects in America lead by Osama bin Ladin.

To counter the PNU advertisement, ODM posted a similar version on TV, implicating Kibaki as an unfit leader who remains silence even on the face of violence and killings and acts of impunity. To them, Kibaki did not deserve a chance as president.

Example 3

IT'S TIME FOR CHANGE

REAL CHANGE

When this happened in Kuresoi. You were.....(silent)

When this happened in Molo, you were.....( silent)

IT'S TIME FOR CHANGE

REAL CHANGE

FOR CHANGE VOTE Raila Odinga

The people's president.

(KTN Nov 6, 2007)

The advert featured a clip of a scary sight of a bloody village in Kuresoi, Rift Valley with a backdrop of darkness, torched house and dead bodies. On the same, several rhetoric questions were asked to evoke fear. The violence depicted in this advert influences the voter to think otherwise in supporting ODM's opponents. The words appearing in orange are deliberately put in that colour to emphasize to the viewer that "change" was necessary since the government has failed to provided security for its citizens. In the event of presenting a bloody past, ODM convinces the audience that change to *Majimboism* was necessary to avoid insecurity.

### 5.3 Oral narratives

Oral narratives are tales or short stories that talk about culture of the people. They are oral because they are told by way of mouth. In these narratives, animals or human beings may be used as characters to symbolize certain ideas that the narrator wants to put across. In most of the oral narratives the narrator ends by telling the listeners the lesson behind the story. To manipulate the audience into accepting the notion of *Majimbo* and other ideas, ODM used a narrative. Look at the following paraphrased narrative as an excerpt: Example 4

Long time ago there was a chameleon called Chemilio. Chemilio did not have any ideas of leadership. He joined us in 2002 and pretended to support us as we rallied support behind him for the presidency. When chemilio became president, he forgot about us and stole our ideas on delivering the new constitution, devolution of power and resources, better healthcare, and creation of job new jobs. Chemilio then kicked us out of his government and named our ideas his own.

ODM used this sensitizing narrative to counter their opponents' agenda who had branded them as noise makers who do nothing but talk.

In the above narrative, the chameleon symbolizes Mwai Kibaki, by way of behaviour and name. The chameleon is called Chemilio, a very close name of Kibaki's first name, Emilio. The first consonant /e/ is replaced by /k/ to have Chemilio /kemilio/. Secondly, the resemblance in the behaviour of Chemilio and Kibaki is implied. This comes in the context of ODM pentagon members, accusing Kibaki of taking their ideas (*Majimboism*, constitution review, better roads, healthcare and CDF) and making them his own, and later kicking them out of his government in 2004, after they had campaigned for him in the 2002 general elections. Kibaki is equated to the non-committal chameleon that keeps changing his colours. Grice (1975; Leech 1983) notes that a speaker needs to relate to the audience in a way that does not lead to communication breakdown. Hence, ODM uses Chemilio, a very close name to Emilio, as the appropriate name for the chameleon to effect the idea that Kibaki is not a committed leader. They also portray the fact that the work of the present regime was their smart ideas hijacked by the latter. In relevance theory, the name Chemilio achieves relevance from the audience since it is familiar to the well known 'Emilio', the president of Kenya at the time. The assumptions drawn from an utterance will help the hearer or the speaker achieve relevance. In this case, Chemilio is used on the assumption that the audience will depict its relevance from the familiarity of the utterance. The context within which Chemilio is used achieves relevance to the hearer.

### 5.4 Use of Songs

During political campaigns, several songs were invented in praise of the contenders. A common feature is singing the agenda of parties during political rallies. Religious songs were changed to suit one's political agenda and appeal to the emotions of the listeners or singers.

Secular songs, were used, especially those that are a favourite to the youths, to attract a following. Artists both gospel and secular were contracted to compose songs of praise for various leaders. For instance:

Example 6

**1. Domo**

**Tt.. tt.. tt.....**

**UGATUZI**

**“MAJIMBO”**

**UGAJIMBO???**

**Allaaaaah!**

DOMO

DOMO

Wewe mtu wa domo...

DOMO

Fanya KAZI

wacha domo lako

Blah blah....

Hatutaki DOMO DOMO

DOMO DOMO

WEWE MTU WA DOMO

Fanya kazi wacha Domo

Acha domo lako

Kazi iendelee X2

Wacha domo lako

Domo Domo Domo” (November 16, 2007)

Translated as:

**Tt.. tt.. tt.....**

**UGATUZI**

**“MAJIMBO”**

**UGAJIMBO???**

**Allaaaaaaaaaaaaah!**

Loud mouth

Loud mouth

You the loudmouth ...

Loudmouth

Would work and stop loud mouthing?

Blah blah....

We don't want loud mouths

Loudmouth

You the loudmouth

Can you work and stop loud mouthing?

The work should continue x2

Stop your loud mouth

In this context, *domo* means the loudmouth. PNU brands the ODM leaders as loudmouths who do nothing but talk. In this song advert PNU emphasizes the confusion between the term *Majimbo* and Ugatuzi. At this time ODM had resorted to use Ugatuzi as opposes to *Majimbo*, claiming that its opponents had tarnished the name and Kenyans fear *Majimbo*. Ugajimbo is coined from the two terms, and PNU is proposing the argument that *Majimbo* and Ugatuzi mean the same thing, hence-ugajimbo.

### 5.5 Use of the plural personal pronoun “We”

“We” is a plural personal pronoun of the singular personal pronoun “I”.

“We” is therefore a collective way of identification as a group.

When we want to attribute to our decent as humans with a common origin, from a religious point of view, we will say: we are the children of Adam and Eve. Or, we are the children of God”.

In other words “we” means we belong together. To identify with the people the political parties used ‘we’ to appeal to the audience, to support their course. Look at the following excerpt: **Example 7**

“we wanted more say on how our country is run... we said instead of having few people in Nairobi deciding our destiny, we ourselves wanted too have some control over our nation’s future and we particularly wanted some control over the development of the particular areas where we lived...we are different from what we were at independence. Most people are now better educated and we understand our rights. We know what we want for our lives and our children’s lives. We are not afraid anymore, and we are able to tell those in power ‘No’ we demonstrated that in the 2005 referendum<sup>20</sup>. We have that power now, and we should never again let it fall from our hands. Instead we need to build on it. And to build on it we need devolved government. That is what we in the ODM promise you.” (Daily Nation, November 2, 2007, p.33)

The above is part of an advert by ODM in the Daily Nation aimed at defining *Majimbo* since PNU had allegedly misquoted it to be a fearsome system that would result to violence. The use of “we” is signifies togetherness. It encompasses both the ODM and the audience (supporters). ODM speaks to that audience that supports them. The audience voted “NO” in the 2005 constitutional referendum<sup>21</sup>. “We” in this case is an inclusive pronoun and whatever ODM says in the advert, the “we” addressed collectively, as well as telling the opponents the ‘truth’ of the matter as per what ODM believe *Majimbo* is. As much as the audience may not have said the exact words as portrayed in the excerpt, the use of assumes the audience being supporters of ODM endorse this particular excerpt and it appears as if it was said collectively the ODM and its supports. When the speaker says’ “we have that power now” and “we know what we want *Majimbo*, manipulation is achieved by way of talking to the audience collectively, hence the audience is made to believe in what the speaker says on his behalf without question.

Manipulation is a speaker’s communication intention is presented covertly. When there is more persuasion hence manipulation is high. Seven forms of manipulation have been discussed to depict how ODM and PNU manipulated the political space to lure voters into supporting or rejecting the concepts *Majimbo*

## 6. Conclusion

The paper has analysed the use of *Majimbo* as a concept used since independence. Both the logical and encyclopedic entries of the concept have been given in relation to relevance theory. The logical entry is the dictionary meaning of words, whereas the encyclopedic entry refers to the use of the words in context. It has been ascertained that the term *Majimbo* does not exist in the dictionary or Kamusi. Terms such as federalism, devolution and regionalism are forms of *Majimbo*; they mean systems of governance that give power, independence and governance from the central unit to regions. The paper has revealed how *Majimbo* as a concept has undergone a historical change of meaning. At independence in 1963-64, it was regionalism, and as time progressed, it becomes an associate of violence characterized with eviction of people from land, which is not their ancestral home. The ODM defined *Majimbo* as a system of Ugatuzi or devolution of resources to benefit poor regions, while PNU gave it connotation saying it meant tribalism, and a concept that would disintegrate the country with violence. It is also evident that manipulation was used to lead the voters into accepting or rejecting *Majimbo*. The strategies of manipulation have been discussed to show how voters were manipulated. These strategies represent a typical Kenyan political language used year in year out during elections.

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<sup>20</sup> Referendum is when people vote in order to make a decision about a particular subject (Longman dictionary of contemporary English, 2003. new edition.

<sup>21</sup> The 2005 referendum refers to the voting by the public to express views as per whether they agree with the new proposed constitution or not. The ‘No’ vote won the majority.

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