Globalization and Conflict in Central Kenya: The Case of Nyeri County, 1980-2010

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Abstract
While conflicts are common in Africa, contextualizing them against the backdrop of globalization calls for new research. This paper focuses on the source of conflict in a rapidly urbanizing rural region in Kenya. Specifically, it looks at globalization and conflict in central Kenya. It links the conflict in the county of Nyeri to the emergence of Mungiki vigilantes and armed militias by arguing that economic decline occasioned by collapse of cash crop and dairy farming contributed to the intensification of conflict. The paper found out that there is a close relationship between neoliberal economic policies and origins of conflict in central Kenya. The study was based on content analysis of documents and oral interviews. Oral interviewees were identified through snowballing techniques. The paper recommends that for the government of Kenya to tackle the issue of conflict, focus must be given to economic growth. Unemployment particularly among the youth must be tackled urgently.
Keywords: Kenya, Nyeri, Conflict, Mungiki, globalization.

1. Introduction
Social conflict in central Kenya intensified between the 1990s and 2002. This was characterized by violence in rural areas. It caught people unawares because the central Kenyan region had been relatively calm in the post independent era. While (Nyatugah, 2001) and (Anderson, 2002) have tried to look at the causes of conflict in central Kenya, they however, have looked at the local factors and have therefore not addressed the impacts of global neo-liberal policies in aggravating conflict in central Kenya. (Mbataru, 2009)has for example detailed the process of the decline of the coffee economy owing to the endogenously driven pressure mainly from Bretton Wood institutions. The focus of this paper is to look at globalization as the trigger of conflict in central Kenya by focusing on Nyeri County.

2. Methodology
The study sought to interrogate the phenomenon of conflict in globalization era in Central Kenya by specifically focusing on Nyeri County in Kenya. In particular, the emergence of vigilantes and armed militias such as the Mungiki is examined against the background of economic dislocation occasioned by global forces of local communities in Kenya. The study is the product of text analysis of political economy literature in Central Kenya in the 1980-2010 period. Oral interviews were conducted using snow balling techniques in order to capture data from respondents on conflict and globalization in the Central Kenya region between 1980 and 2010. The researcher used purposive sampling to identify 100 respondents from Nyeri County, who were interviewed orally in order to shed light on conflict in the region from a historical perspective. Great effort was taken to include the youth and elders and ensure gender balance in the sample.

3. Conflict in Central Kenya Prior to the Advent of Globalization in the 1980s.
Central Kenya comprises five counties, namely: Kiambu, Murang'a, Nyeri, Kirinyaga and Nyandarua. The 2009 population census results indicated that the population of this region was 4,383,743 (GOK, 2009). Central Kenya is also the ancestral homeland of the Kikuyu people in Kenya. Nyeri County which is the main focus of the study covers an area of 3,266 sq km and had a population of 661,156,000 people during the 1999 population census (NCPAD,2005). It borders with Murang'a, Nyandarua and Kirinyaga Counties in Central Kenya, as well as the Laikipia and Meru County to the north east. The main physical features of the county are Mt. Kenya (5199m) to the east and the Aberdare range (3999m) to the west. These mountains are of volcanic origin and they significantly determine relief, climate and soils, and consequently, the agricultural potential of the County (NCPAD, 2005). In general, the County experiences good rainfall and has good fertile soils that make it a key agricultural producer for food crops, and cash crops such as tea and coffee. Keeping of dairy cattle and horticultural farming has also become important occupations .Consequently, the county has a high population density in most regions and land is heavily fragmented resulting in a decline in productivity. The climate in the county is not uniform. For instance, the eastern, western and northern parts are colder and receive more rains than the southern and northern parts. The richer agricultural farmlands border the highland regions of Mount Kenya and Aberdare ranges, respectively. This could explain the economic variation and the consequent differentiation in the standards of living. As (Loizos, 1994) observes, lifestyles of the people are shaped by many factors; historical, the distinctive regional climate, soil fertility and contrasting production regimes (Kiruthu,

2007)

In order to appreciate the root causes of conflict in Central Kenya and Nyeri County in particular since 1980, it is imperative to understand the political and economic situation of the country in general since the onset of colonialism in the late 19th Century. The study benefits immensely from the use of the social movement lenses as employed by Jensen et al (2007) in investigating the factors that led to escalation of conflict in Central Kenya. The analysis focuses on the main factors motivating collective action such as political forces and resource mobilization. It argues that history of British colonialism has no doubt contributed immensely to the post colonial identity of the Kikuyu people. In particular, the struggle against the British settlers has played a crucial role in the post-independence political and economic architecture of this people. The proximity to the White settlers' farms also meant that Christianity, Western medicine and Western education was also introduced here earlier than elsewhere in the country and this has greatly impacted on the socio-economic changes and identity of the population (Ochieng, 1989).

However, colonialism also created or exacerbated existing inter- and intra ethnic fault lines in African communities. Among the Kikuyu, for example, the colonial administration created chieftaincies where they did not exist. These were to be the local beacons of British values: educated elite and to transmute Christian values to the natives. Above all, these were to act as purveyors of colonial political hegemony. By the late 1920s the fault-lines were already appearing, expressed for example through the bitter rivalry between the supporters of African traditions particularly over the issue of female circumcision and the supporters of Christian missions known as Kirore group who were diehard loyalists in Central Kenya (Thiong'o, 2010)This, among other factors eventually led to the emergence of independent churches and movements in Central Kenya, such as the Kikuyu independent churches Association and Kikuyu Karing'a Association. Songs such as *muthirigu* which mocked the Whites and the loyalists marked the beginning of potent internal polarization among members of the community (Kanogo, 2005)

This religio-cultural conflict, has continued even in post independent Kenya. Simeon Nyachae who was a long serving Provincial Commissioner in Central Province has observed that during his tenure in the 1970s, there were serious divisions in the province especially between the mainstream churches and the independent church which accused mainstream churches of having stolen their land, among other evils (Nyachae, 2010)A pointer to this conflict in modern Central Kenya is manifested in the competition for sponsorship of educational institutions, which at times undermines professionalism as different churches jostle to identify a school head from their denomination. During the 1970s primary school- going children would be forced to leave a good school near their homes, and walk several kilometers to attend a school sponsored by a denomination of their parents' or guardian. This phenomenon has contributed significantly to the undermining of good relations among members of the community.

The roots of this disunity in Central Kenya can be properly grasped by a close study of the history of the region. Colonial oppression had by the end of the Second World War provoked Africans in Kenya to start violent resistance, but this dangerous turn of events did not become obvious until the late 1940s when white settlers complained of attacks on their property and general insecurity as oath taking among Kikuyu   intensified (Elkins, 2005)These activities polarized the Kikuyu people especially because the Christian converts were reluctant to take the oath, a factor that created great tension in the region. Anyone who had not taken the oath was regarded with great suspicion and was seen as potential risk to the rest of the community by the supporters of the Mau Mau (CF Kanogo, 2005; (Thiong'o, 2010)(Elkins, 2005).

The assassination of chief Waruhiu wa Kungu in 1952 in Kiambu marked a watershed in the history of the Kikuyu community and Kenya as a country. The new Governor to Kenya who had dilly dallied with the idea of calling for more military support from the British metropolitan government now declared a State of Emergency, which was accompanied by the arrest of the community leaders including Jomo Kenyatta and the rest of the Kapenguria six(Kung'u Karumba, Paul Ngei, Bildad Kaggia and Achieng' Oneko). The Mau Mau movement had crystallized into an agrarian movement by the 1950s and its aftermath was disastrous. It is an acknowledged fact that this war resulted in the loss of life, property and immense misery for the community (Odoyo, 2009). Even more importantly, it worsened the relations among the Kikuyu themselves much more than ever before.

Apart from attacking the white settlers and their property, government installations were also vandalized. Within the community, the Christian converts and the homeguards were perceived as traitors alongside the chiefs and their families. It should be noted that the murder of loyalists such as chief Nderi and Christian converts who fought against Mau Mau oathing activities in Nyeri County, divided the Kikuyu community in the region even more. The divisiveness that accompanied the Mau Mau war has been a great source of discomfort both for the families which supported the Mau Mau and those which supported the loyalists. With the creation of the Home guard loyalist unit, for example, the colonial government further contributed to worsening relations among the Kikuyu community. In the words of Anderson (2005), the establishment of the Home Guard contributed to the civil war among the members of the community

significantly (2005: 240). Many supporters of the Mau Mau are yet to forget names of the colonial supervisors, neighbours who betrayed their parents, brothers and other relatives to the colonial authorities or to the Mau Mau forces ((Ochieng, 1989)(Elkins, 2005)

The Swyynerton plan which was initiated in 1954 under Roger van Swynnerton[1], a senior agricultural officer, further contributed to this polarization in the community. It created a huge wedge between the loyalists who took advantage of the absence of many Mau Mau detainees and prisoners during land adjudication and consolidation programme and accumulated land at their expense and that of their families. The programme was initiated at a time when a large group of Mau Mau supporters were still in detention and therefore gave advantage to the loyalists, some who acquired land belonging to those detainees and prisoners awaiting release from colonial jails and detention centres (Ogot & Ochieng, 1995); (Elkins, 2005)It is argued here that live memory of the Mau Mau war is also a memory of this injustice. The brutality, murder and other atrocities against the kikuyu by the British colonial forces is something that lives on in the memory of the community even as Jomo Kenyatta exhorted the community to "forgive but not to forget" those painful experiences. The fact that Kenyatta was alive to the bitterness obtaining between the loyalist families and the Mau Mau and their supporters is illustrated by his exhortation at every opportunity soon after independence with a call for the community not to revenge. He is quoted as having advised the community that "kwĩrĩhĩria nĩ kwa ihĩĩ" (uncircumcised boys can be expected to revenge but not adults).

At independence, a substantial population in Central Kenya especially the supporters of the Mau Mau who were poor, felt rather frustrated with what was going on in government. The land resettlement programme in particular was a source of bitterness in Central Kenya and significantly contributed to the ensuing divisiveness in the community. After independence in 1963, many of the supporters of the Mau Mau expected to get rewards for having sacrificed their lives in the freedom struggle, only to get a rude shock when Mzee Jomo Kenyatta declared that the philosophy of the emergent country was going to be Uhuru na Kazi (Kinyatti, 2008). Politicians such as Bildad Kaggia who supported a socialist ideology felt that Kenyatta was betraying the poor (Nyanchoga, 1945)). In Kandara constituency, one of the political competitors of Bildad Kaggia was George Mwichigi, the son of Chief Ndung'u wa Kagori. In most parts of Central Kenya, it is the politicians from loyalist background who had acquired higher education and resources to enable them contest and therefore win political seats, a matter that left the society often divided. Kaggia went on to establish his own religious sect after he was sidelined from politics, known as Dini ya Kaggia. However, the loyalists ridiculed and poured scorn on it referring to it as the religion of the poor and miserable. Another politician from Central Kenya who articulated a socialist orientation was Josiah Mwangi Kariuki, who was assassinated in 1975 (Kiruthu, 2001). It is worth noting that it was not until 2002 when President Kibaki ascended into political power that the Mau Mau was removed from the list of terrorist or proscribed movements in Kenya.

It is important to point out the fundamental importance of the land issue after independence among Kenyan communities. According to Southall (2005), while at the end of the previous century the colonial administration could justify its allocation of lands to European settlers on the argument that with an African population of just some 4 million, there was plenty of space for all, at independence in 1963 the total population had grown to 8.2 million and was one of the highest population growth rates in the world. This could explain the high number of young unemployed people who were flocking into the City of Nairobi by the early 1970s (ILO, 1972). For the majority of African peasants in Central Kenya, the main avenue for earning their livelihood was by growing cash crops and keeping dairy cattle. Income generated from the sale of cash crops such as pyrethrum, tea and coffee was highly valued as it enabled them to educate their children through the secondary school with the hope that they would also join the middle class and uplift their families economically possibly to the middle class status. This could explain the high voltage politics in the cooperative movement in central Kenya. Cooperatives were the bedrock of financial support among the peasants. Budding politicians capitalized on their large acreage of land and cash crop production in order to seek elective posts in cooperative societies. Such positions were therefore often used and are still used by politicians as the political launching pad to enable them to win electoral positions especially at the ward and constituency levels.

According   to some reports, following the Africanization of business after independence public servants were among the cadre that benefitted most from this window of opportunity as they had both the know-how and the capital to succeed in business (Nyamu, 1975) ,. This could also explain the emerging struggles between the various factions of the political class all the way from independence in 1963 up to 2014 as there is a direct correlation in Kenya between political opportunities and economic accumulation (Ghai and Cottrel, 2013). Even the political alliance that had been formed between the petty bourgeoisie and peasant majority in the struggle for independence in Central Kenya fractured as soon as it became clear that the elite, both the former loyalists and the freedom crusaders, became a closely knit class of accumulators after independence. New

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[1] This was a far reaching comprehensive social-economic reform, with a focus on land reform, mainly mass privatization of property in central Kenya.

alliances were now emerging, primarily between the landed capitalists, many of whom had been loyalists, the expanding bureaucratic and managerial classes and the politicians. Indeed, these are the same people who immensely benefited from the land resettlement schemes after independence. In short, all those who stood to gain in the new scheme of things including acquiring farms and business opportunities formerly reserved for European settlers and Asians began forging some alliances based on economic and political interests often in collaboration with foreign investors from Western Europe (leys, 1975) posit that contemporary forms of indigenous capital have been generated as much as by political experience of the colonial period as much as through passages through which predominance of international capital over production was secured. They argue that the hegemonic class of post independence state was incorporated out of indigenous capital. This argument is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that although in the first decade of independence official development policy was termed 'African socialism' as contained in the economic blue print of the country, the Sessional Paper no 10 of 1965, by the 1970s there was no doubt that the country was determined to pursue a certain brand of capitalism. The sessional paper no. 10 of 1965 advocated for the development of a mixed economy based on African socialism. In actual fact the Kenyatta state encouraged   a combination of both domestic and foreign private enterprise, while at the same time promoting large investments in the public sector corporations as well as in physical and social infrastructure. Social infrastructure entailed investments in schools and health centres among other things.

It is important to note that Kenyan leadership was eclectic in its economic policies. On one hand, the post independence leadership entered arrangements with some of the foreign business interests in order to advance their self economic interests but at the national level also declared their intention to reduce the dominance of foreigners in the Kenyan economy especially in business after independence. This was to be done mainly through the mechanism of legislation and licensing. The first such legislation was the Trade Licensing Act of 1967 (Ochieng, 1989).This excluded non-citizens from trading in rural and non-urban areas and even went on to specify a list of goods, which were to be restricted to citizen-traders only. This legislation greatly undermined the prospects of Asian entrepreneurs and gave undue advantage to budding African entrepreneurs particularly the elite (Himbara, 1994)The basic consumer goods affected by this legislation included textiles, soap and cement. The Kenya National Trading Corporation (KNTC), which had been formed in 1965 to handle domestic import-export trade, was used extensively in the period after 1967 as an instrument to penetrate the wholesale and retail trade by the new African bourgeoisie. It is important to note that this sector was previously the preserve of the non-citizens, mainly the Europeans and to a lesser extent, Asian traders.

In addition to acquiring business interests, many Africans with senior ranks either in the civil service, military as well as African directors of subsidiaries of international firms in Kenya moved to acquire and operate large agricultural holdings in the Kenya highlands, which were formerly the preserve of the European settlers (Leys, 1975). Professionals, such as lawyers and doctors soon followed and straddled between their careers, farming and small businesses. As we have already seen, the policy of the newly independent government resonated well with a good number of people, especially after 1971 when the Ndegwa Commission report sanctioned the engagement in business by public servants. The policy allowed public servants to straddle between their public office jobs and establishment of businesses. Unfortunately, many such public servants more often than not used the state apparatus to promote their personal interests. Economic differentiation that arose created wide class cleavages especially between the landless and the middle class families. This is because the government was unable to settle majority of the landless families in the large-scale farms. Although a good number of these landless families settled in the Rift Valley, where some parcels of land from former white settler farms were acquired, this did not eliminate the problem of land hunger as even here the peasants were required to pay some money to land buying companies and cooperatives and these were therefore unaffordable to several peasant families (Ochieng, 1989).

Between 1963 and 1970, about half a million Kenyan farmers and their families were settled on around two million acres of land previously owned by European settlers (Branch, 2011). Consequently, African farmers who benefitted were able to participate in the extraordinary growth in the Kenyan economy over the first years of independence. The revenue of farmers increased rapidly due to the earnings accrued from the expansion in the production of every conceivable cash crop and livestock product. Many of these ordinary farmers were able to participate in the economy through access to land vacated by European farmers. Unfortunately, very many peasants were unable to benefit from this process, leaving many people in the region disillusioned with the government especially because it was obvious that well connected individuals got more than a fair share of land redistribution by virtue of various networks including corrupt dealings with civil servants and politicians.

After political independence, therefore, land continued to provide an important avenue for accumulation as illustrated by the release of the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the illegal allocation of Public Land chaired by Paul Ndungu in December, 2004. The Report gave details of illegal land awards made to both the Kenyatta and Moi families, as well as to a number of those in the political class especially former ministers, Members of Parliament, judges, civil servants and military officers. It is important to note that during the land

settlement, a number of Africans were able to acquire wholesale land formerly owned by the white settlers through a soft loan from the World Bank which was availed through the government of Kenya. This obviously gave such a privileged group undue advantage over their less wealthy counterparts (Branch, 2011)

Access to land especially in Central Kenya is of critical importance. Apart for providing an avenue for production of important cash crops, land in itself is a highly precious commodity that fetches very high prices in the market, a factor that has gone a long way to entice public officers and politicians to engage in the illegal allocation of public land in the country as confirmed by the Ndungu Report. As Branch notes, Kenyan coffee farmers benefitted immensely during the 1975 "coffee boom" (Branch, 2011). This was occasioned by the spike in the global prices of coffee following the frost attack of Brazilian coffee. In Kenya, incomes from coffee grew dramatically, and the results were visible across the coffee growing areas particularly in Central Province. There the livelihood pattern improved substantially as evidenced by construction of stone buildings, purchase of motor vehicles and establishment of small business ventures. However, hand in glove with wealth generation among the landed groups, was intensification of poverty among the landless. This planted seeds of bitterness especially among the youth and its ugly results was the emergence of youth militia in central Kenya in the 1990s. Ownership of land has therefore been an important launch pad to wealth creation in Kenya after independence.

4. Globalization and the economy of Central Kenya, 1980-2010

In the 1980s, the western donors and Bretton Woods institutions recommended for the structural Adjustment Programmes in order to correct the economic difficulties encountered by most African countries. Using the neo-liberal theories which became overly powerful upon the collapse of the former Soviet Union, the Western bureaucrats attributed the collapse of most African economies in the 1980s mainly due to a combination of both political and economic mismanagement by African political leaders. The overwhelming focus of attention was on strictly macro-economic issues related to the causes of the crises in African economies and how these crises might be tackled within the framework of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) designed, almost without exception, by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (Olukoshi, 1995). The SAPs introduced several conditionalities for the Less Developed Countries. These included: devaluation of the local currencies, reduction of tariffs, encouragement of domestic savings and reduction of government expenditure on social services.

Critics of SAPs as implemented in Africa have observed that these conditionalities had many adverse consequences on the Human Development Index in terms of deterioration human rights, access to food, education, employment, shelter and health, clean environment, and security of persons (Mkandawire, 2003) In addition, it has been pointed out that on the question of governance, structural adjustment greatly undermined the administrative structure and capacity of many African states. For instance, civil service organizations were practically paralyzed as public servants, faced with diminishing incomes and rising costs of living resorted to moonlighting activities which further undermined their efficiency at the work place (Olukoshi, 1995). Moreover, many state structures, especially those associated with the provision of social services were paralyzed and thereby undermining the legitimacy of the state.

Several other aspects of the SAPS contributed to strains on communal relations and ultimately created a crisis in the country, especially in Central Kenya. For instance, as part of the focus on reforms on good governance, the international donor community demanded for political pluralism. This in turn, motivated the political elite to grab state assets such as land and government houses, which were then given out or sold to realize largesse with which to bribe voters during elections ((Bayart & Ellis, 1999). 1999; (kiruthu, 2014). In essence, this meant that families without economic means and political clout continued to suffer not only from political frustrations, but also from economic and social frustrations.

The liberalization of the agricultural sector in Kenya therefore exacerbated the situation in Central Kenya. Among the agricultural institutions that were weakened by the SAPS included the Pyrethrum Board of Kenya (PBK), Kenya Cooperative Creameries (KCC) and the Kenya Planters Cooperative Union (KPCU). The collapse of these institutions heralded the death of the vibrant producer cooperatives in the country. Prior to this development, cooperatives used to give logistical and financial support especially in the acquisition of farm inputs as well as in the marketing of farm produce. Thus, their collapse contributed tension among farmers in Central Kenya in several (Mbataru, 2009). First, previously, the cooperatives would give out loans to the farmers to enable them to discharge their domestic obligations such as payment of school fees and hospital bills based on the amount of produce delivered to the producer cooperatives by each farmer. Such liquidity enabled the small-scale farmers to enjoy stable family life. Secondly, the cooperatives used to acquire agricultural inputs such as fertilizers and pesticides on behalf of farmers on credit and the beneficiaries were then expected to pay for the inputs upon receiving payment for their produce (kiruthu, 2014).

This desperate situation could be understood by the fact that up to December 2007, some of the pyrethrum farmers had not been paid for their deliveries dating way back to the 1990s when the industry began to experience problems (kiruthu, 2014) (kiruthu, 2014)This implies that farmers who would otherwise have

benefited from the growing of this cash crop in Central Kenya lost their earnings and this left many families devastated economically especially the men, who were controlling cash crop production in most of Central Kenya. Similarly, the liberalization of the economy also undermined both coffee and tea growing in the region. New coffee millers ere licensed to compete with the Kenya Planters Cooperative Union (KPCU). These included the privately owned Thika Coffee Mills and some Multinational coffee growers in the country such as Sosfinaf (kiruthu, 2014)This was in spite of the fact that most of the small-scale coffee growers had developed their farms with financial support of the KPCU for many years. Coffee cherries theft if factories and farms also escalated as the thieves could sell the cherries to the highest bidder. This exacerbated the already desperate situation particularly in Nyeri County.

One of the immediate responses of the farmers in Central Kenya to the crisis was to abandon cash crop farming, especially coffee, pyrethrum and tea. Unfortunately, this meant that in actual fact, this left the peasants with no source of livelihood. The scale of the crisis is perhaps illustrated by the fact that many of the small shopping centers in Central Kenya acquired a new name, "mung'etho", that means 'a place for idlers' in the eyes of the community. This was because most shops would be closed and young men would be hanging around with no specific economic activity, thanks to . the collapsed state of the rural economy (Kiruthu, 2014). Farmers responded by either uprooting coffee and tea, or by abandoning the cash crops altogether ((Kiruthu,, 2007), (Terrisa & Brownhill, 2001). According to the Nyeri District Strategic Plan (2005), the level of poverty is estimated to be on the increase as a result of poor performance in the agricultural sector. It was observed that among the farmers, inadequate access to credit for investment is considered as a major cause of poverty while lack of employment and under-employment are the other causes. It is not difficult to understand the underlying causes of conflict especially among the youth.

Consequently, in Central Kenya, the impact of SAPs was most profound among the small holder coffee farmers. This is manifested in the proliferation of violent disputes between farmers and coffee cooperative societies in the region ((Branch, 2011): (Mbataru, 2009). While the larger coffee farmers who controlled the cooperatives preferred the existing coffee marketing arrangement with the Kenya Planters Cooperative Union (KPCU), smaller farmers advocated for a restructuring so that they could market their commodity through the newly licensed Thika Coffee Mills. Consequently, the smallholders who did not wish to continue trading their coffee with KPCU demanded for the splitting up of the larger cooperatives so that suppliers to factories with like minds could form smaller cooperatives. As disputes escalated through 1999, rival farmers stormed coffee factories armed with all manner of weapons, including pangas, bows and arrows. As Branch observes, these infamous disputes were named the "coffee wars" and had the effect of undermining the household incomes to the extent of scaling down school enrollment in Central Kenya. Discussing the same phenomena in Nyeri County, Mbataru (2009) has observed that the pro KPCU farmers were labeled T9 (rabid dogs which were rumoured to have escaped from the soldiers during the Uganda-Tanzania War of the late 1970s), while the pro –split group, who wished to break away from the cooperative movement were referred to as the "split". The communal disharmony arising from these coffee wars not only led to serious injuries but also to deaths of some peasants. Similarly, tea farmers were also involved in serious disputes. Led by a disgruntled tea grower by the name Wanjuguna, the small-scale tea growers even demanded for the establishment of an alternative marketing agency to compete against the officially recognized Kenya Tea Development Authority.

The collapse of the cash crop sector in Central Kenya led many young men in the region into alcoholism (Kiruthu, Musalia, & Ndeda, 2012). Many of them spent time consuming the cheap liquors and on several occasions loss of lives was reported on the account of the cheap brews, while others lost their eyesight due to chemicals used by brewers in order to enhance potency of the liquor (Kiruthu, 2014). Having abandoned any hope in the government, many Kenyans turned to alcohol and other forms of deviant behavior. Others turned to Pentecostalism (Branch, 2011) as way of venting out hopelessness. Pentecostal churches increased in large numbers earning Kenya the dubious credit of being one of the countries with the largest number of unregistered churches in the world. Some of these churches were headed by Nigerian and American pastors. The Winners Chapel which is led by the Nigerian Bishop Oyedepo is one of these churches (Branch, 2011) as well as the Jesus is Alive Ministries (JIAM), that is headed by Bishop Margaret Wanjiru. While some of these churches hired open grounds on Sundays, others were contented with worshipping in hired halls as the number of churches was increasing by the day. Religious broadcasting also took up space in the newly licensed radio and television stations in the 1990s as Kenyans continued to search for spiritual solace and prosperity during hard economic times (Kavulla, 2008) (Kavulla, 2008).

5. The Emergence of Mungiki Militia

It is against this backdrop of collapsed economy in Kenya that militia gangs including the Mungiki attracted a lot of young men in Nyeri and the entire Central Kenya and beyond from the 1990s. According to analysts, the term Mungiki means: "we are the public"(Wamue, 2001; (Kagwanja, 2003)). The organization originally emerged as a religious group and was led by a Kikuyu elder by the name Ngonya wa Gakonya, who led a traditional

religious sect known as the *tent of the living God*. Its hall mark during the pioneer days was to pray to the traditional God of the Kikuyu people facing Mount Kenya. Members also emphasized traditions such as taking snuff, keeping dreadlocks and female circumcision. However, with time, the character of the organization changed dramatically and the main focus became socio-economic and political grievances of the Kikuyu poor. It is a fact that the bulk of membership constituted of marginalized groups in society such as the unemployed, hawkers, touts and jua kali artisans (Kinyanjui & Kiruthu, 2007). Kagwanja(2003), has pointed out the strong relationship between the economic downturn in the country following the liberalization of the economy and the emergence of Mungiki militia.

Apart from the household gendered constraints, the economic challenges that accompanied liberalization created a lot of conflict between parents and their children. In a capitalist society like Kenya where the well-connected men are able to secure either business opportunities or jobs for their children, other youths in the society are often left desperate (Kiruthu, 2014). In such a situation, conflict especially between the male youths and their parents becomes inevitable. Some of the youth in Nyeri, for instance began to demand that family land be partitioned so that they could get a means of livelihood. In an area where there is a serious scarcity of land, such demands were bound to cause bitter family feuds, some of which resulted in bloodshed as families fight over land ownership, as well as cases of suicide. Indeed, the mainstream media in Kenya has reported several cases of suicide among men in Central Kenya between the 1980s and 2010. Although research has not been conclusive, it can be argued that there is a great connection between the socio-economic problems and the suicide phenomena (Kiruthu, 2007)

Apart from the failure of the state to provide basic services such as water, roads, health facilities and education to the public, the government was also unable to protect the public from insecurity, corrupt public servants as well as cruelty from criminals and the police corruption, respectively. The Mungiki was quick to capitalize on this gap by providing some of the militia protection services. The movement not only provided vigilante services but also quasi police services such as keeping order in bus parks, where it fought vicious battles with other cartels that dominated the passenger taxi sector. Thus, it can again be concluded that there is a correlation between the weak *state*, the situation of unemployment in Kenya, general lawlessness experienced in central Kenya, and the emergence of the Mungiki. The situation in Kenya is akin to the experience of other African countries where the emergence of armed militias and vigilantes has been reported. (Jensen, 2007)) observes that some of the most important social conflicts in Africa are negotiated in every day policing and involve gender and inter-generation conflicts. In this situation, younger and older men as well as economically well-off men compete to either gain or maintain authority, respect and livelihood, in a time of socio-economic upheavals and change (2007:49). The Mungiki members, being young and economically disadvantaged, perceived the older men who monopolize political power, ownership of land and other economic assets, as the enemies. This could explain why one of the popular slogans during general elections since 2002 was to remove the old guard from power, followed by a call for its replacement by the younger generation. It was partly this sorry state of affairs that made the National Alliance of Rainbow Coalition (NARC) administration led by President Mwai Kibaki, to constitute a commission to investigate the grabbing of public land. The Ndung'u Land Commission, which was launched in July 2003, was charged with the task of investigating the irregular allocation of public land. The commission presented a report to the Minister for lands and Housing, Amos Kimunya in 2004 and recommended for the repossession of all the grabbed public property. This included over 1,000 houses and plots carved out of government compounds irregularly allocated to individuals. Others included public cemeteries, parks, forestland and other public property, (Kiruthu, 2014)

The Mungiki militia was therefore thriving in this environment, characterized by corruption and weak economy. The militias argued that they were fighting against political, economic and social injustice. Kagwanja (2003) observes that there are striking parallels between the Mungiki and the Mau Mau liberation movement that fought against the British government during colonialism. He says that while the Mau Mau drew the bulk of its support from the evicted squatters in the colonial Rift Valley, Mungiki drew its support from thousands of people displaced by politically instigated ethnic clashes especially in Rift Valley Province during the 1990s. Second, just as Mau Mau mobilized its support among the urban lumpen proletariat against colonial social and economic injustice, the Mungiki also featured the poor, such as those retrenched from employment and the landless against oppressive landlords, corrupt land grabbers and the tyranny of the ruling elite (Anderson, 2002; Kagwanja, 2003). Some of the mungiki followers stated categorically that their movement would ensure that prime land; housing estates and other up market property would eventually revert to the ownership of the movements' followers (Daily Nation, 17th April, 2007). The sect also took issue with what it considered the criminalization of poverty as evident in the eviction of squatters from Mount Kenya and Aberdare forests.

The movement grew very fast fanned by the serious income disparities between the rich and the poor in Central Kenya, and by the high level of unemployment. Members of the mungiki took control of several businesses such as the commuter transport industry, otherwise known as the matatu sector. (Matatus are passenger taxis in Kenya, which are privately owned.) The gang demanded 'protection fees 'from matatu

operators and other businesses in most of Central Kenya and on some routes in Nairobi, especially from the 1990s. Consequently, in April 2007, members of the movement set fire on matatus and houses when touts and drivers from Githunguri and Banana Hills in Kiambu resisted paying extortion fees. In both instances, the villagers joined the fight in support of the matatu operators and in the process many of them were injured and several deaths were also reported. It should be noted that members of the Mungiki are reported to have participated in retaliatory attacks during the 2007-2008 Post Election Violence in Kenya's Rift Valley Province and in the slum areas of Nairobi, resulting in loss of life, destruction of property and displacement of populations (Biegon, 2009). In addition, on the 29th of April 2009, twenty-nine (29) innocent people were killed by the *Mungiki* in Mathira region of Nyeri County, as the members of the movement retaliated against the killing of fifteen (15) of their members in Kirinyaga County a week earlier. These were executed by community vigilantes, in a place christened, *The Hague* by the residents, in memory of the International Court of Justice in The Hague, Netherlands, where names of those suspected of committing crimes against humanity are tried and sentenced. The Mathira killings have been referred to as the Mathira Massacre in the media (Landinfo, 2010). Hand in glove with the emergence of the Mungiki movement was the rise in the general state of insecurity in most of central Kenya and especially in Nyeri County. Due to the high rate of unemployment among the youth, many of the young men graduated to become sophisticated criminals. Since the 1980s, majority of the vehicles that were car jacked in the capital city, Nairobi, eventually ended up being abandoned in central Kenya, or were taken across the border to Tanzania through sophisticated criminal networks. As a result of this situation, the middle class from Central Kenya was forced to relocate from their ancestral homes and either rented, or bought apartments in up market estates of Nairobi (Kiruthu, 2014).

6. Conclusion

From the foregoing analysis, it has been demonstrated that there is a strong correlation between globalization and escalation of intra communal conflict in central Kenya since the 1980s. The social movements' lens has been employed to analyze the underlying causes of conflict in Central Kenya. We have seen that in order to understand the current socio-economic crisis, it is important to focus on how colonial advent shaped the Kikuyu society of Central Kenya. The rural differentiation which arose from the outset of colonial land alienation and introduction of Christianity and Western education contributed enormously towards this development. Consequently, this generated hostility between the loyalists versus the Christians, which was replicated during the Mau Mau war from the 1950s. The aftermath of Mau Mau war saw the loyalists continue to benefit in terms of land acquisition and salaried employment after independence. This wide gap in wealth that arose between the peasants and the elite created tensions between members of the society. Similarly, the collapse of the cash crop economy due to the forces of globalization further created intra-community conflict among the farmers. This unfortunate situation generated frustrations leading to increased rate of alcoholism and depression among the males in Nyeri. The roots of Mungiki militia in Central Kenya are therefore to be found in this situation of unemployment and lack of means of earning livelihood among the male youth. The government must therefore take urgent measures to reform the economy so as to generate jobs, reform the cash crop sector and create self-employment opportunities for the members of the society. This is the only way to address threats to national security like the Mungiki gangs as well as other incidents of insecurity.

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