Need for an Alternative System of Political Governance in Kenya

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Kenya is a multi-nation state working on African socialism as stipulated in a 1965 Sessional Paper. However, the internal character of the nation is both intriguing and troubling. Kenya is a capitalist state chiefly characterized by negative ethnicity and systemic corruption at all levels. Mostly, service delivery is rendered on a bribe price basis. This state of affairs has compromised with Kenya's socio-economic take-off like in the case of South Korea in the 1960s.

However, Kenya has, for a long time, entertained aspirations towards industrialization and middle income status. It was in the Mwai Kibaki Administration, 2002-2013, that Kenya drafted and adopted Kenya Vision 2030. This vision entailed infrastructural development and marked strides towards industrialization. But as of 2018 pundits claimed that Kenya had not made even the first step towards Vision 2030 because a greater percentage of her people are still illiterate and that a greater portion of the country is not opened up through effective infrastructural development like transport, electricity, Internet, telephone, education, among others. Even a higher percentage of mobile banking has only served to promote a consumption character of the economy. For Kenya to industrialize, which is the surest sign of attainment of Vision 2030, she needs to produce, invest and save. Considerably, all these economic failures can be attributed to the wrong system of political governance in the country.

In the colonial period a unified nation was sought by subduing different ethnic groupings using English and Swahili languages to some extent. However, even the anti-colonial resistance struggles were fought in different regions as detached resistance against land grab by the colonial administration. This ethnic factionalism was carried forward through independence whereby in the party formations ethnic affiliations were clear-cut with Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) representing the interests of Rift Valley and coastal regions on the framework of federalism, whereas Kenya African National Union (KANU) championed the interest of centralization of governance, with the people of central Kenya at the core. This democratic space was short-lived.

In 1982 after an attempted coup all political parties were banned with Kenya becoming a one party unitary state with KANU as the ruling party. This scenario narrowed the political and economic space in the country, with the West suspending aid for promoting democracy. However, in 1992 Kenya returned to multi-party democracy, although with limited room for maneuver by opposition political parties.

It was in 2002 when a serious yearning for change by Kenyans took centre stage with Mwai Kibaki becoming the third president of Kenya under National Rainbow Coalition (NARC). This change-over ushered in some economic reforms that were supported by a look into East outlook, with the Thika superhighway funded and built by the Chinese. In this period like in the 1991-1992 and 1997 saw devastating violence out of disputed presidential election results between Mwai Kibaki and Raila Odinga. And this spate of violence (political instability) ran through Kenya's post-colony beginning with shifta war (attempted secession of northern Kenya). Thus, there is need for an alternative system of political governance.

Kenya has experimented with different systems of political governance with parliamentary system at the turn of independence, multi-party democracy up to 1982, one-party dictatorship until 1992, and purely multi-party democracy up to 2013, where a hybrid multi-party democracy centred on county system came into force. However, the fact that the 2017 presidential election was disputed with a possible secession of some regions still called for an urgent alternative system of political governance.

I would recognize that an acknowledgement of the ethnic character of Kenya would call for such systems as guided meritocracy or rotational presidency where different ethnic groupings are placed together based on such affinities as language, cultural or religious values, and asked to produce a president or a deputy president on established proportionality. However, a meritocracy would offer an interesting alternative for the people of Kenya because it serves to provide the much needed service delivery.