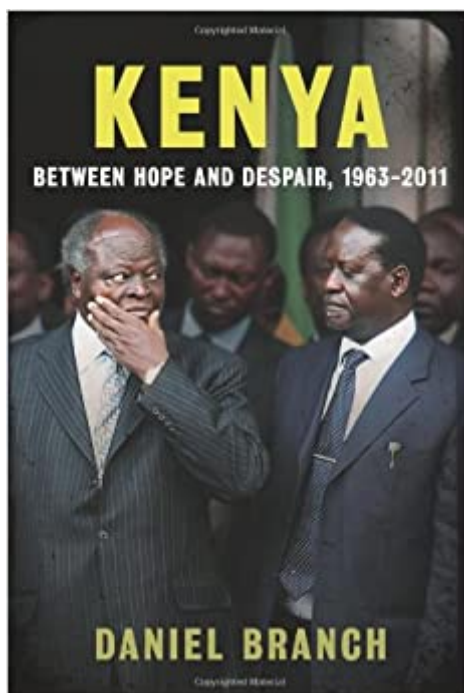


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Kenya: Between Hope And Despair, 1963-2011



Synopsis

On December 12, 1963, people across Kenya joyfully celebrated independence from British colonial rule, anticipating a bright future of prosperity and social justice. As the nation approaches the fiftieth anniversary of its independence, however, the people's dream remains elusive. During its first five decades Kenya has experienced assassinations, riots, coup attempts, ethnic violence, and political corruption. The ranks of the disaffected, the unemployed, and the poor have multiplied. In this authoritative and insightful account of Kenya's history from 1963 to the present day, Daniel Branch sheds new light on the nation's struggles and the complicated causes behind them. Branch describes how Kenya constructed itself as a state and how ethnicity has proved a powerful force in national politics from the start, as have disorder and violence. He explores such divisive political issues as the needs of the landless poor, international relations with Britain and with the Cold War superpowers, and the direction of economic development. Tracing an escalation of government corruption over time, the author brings his discussion to the present, paying particular attention to the rigged election of 2007, the subsequent compromise government, and Kenya's prospects as a still-evolving independent state.

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Customer Reviews

"[An] engaging and important book." —Philip Murphy, *International Affairs* (Philip Murphy *International Affairs* 2012-01-01)
...there had been a glaring shortage of really good general works on its post-independence history. [Kenya] not only plugs that hole, but has much to say too about the possible futures of many other poor post-colonial

states. [Stephen Howe, The Independent \(Stephen Howe The Independent 2011-11-25\)](#) “Branch has produced a largely narrative account, accessible to the general, non-specialist reader, and an excellent primer for students on African Studies courses interested in Kenya.” [Warris Vianni, Awaaz Magazine.com \(Warris Vianni Awaaz Magazine.com 2012-02-04\)](#) “The greatest strength of the book is its scope. Branch masterfully pulls together five decades of often baffling complexity doublespeak and cover-ups, into an insightful and highly readable story. Kenyan historiography has been begging for such a book.” [This book’s achievements deserve to be celebrated: combining scholarly rigour with accessibility, it stands as the best account of post-colonial Kenyan politics.](#) [Edward Goodman, The English Historical Review \(Edward Goodman The English Historical Review 2013-08-01\)](#) --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In this illuminating account of Kenya’s first fifty years of independence, an authority on African history analyzes how ethnic violence, government corruption, inequality, and other difficult issues hinder national prosperity and justice. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Kenyans experienced independence in 1963, but not all enjoyed the rights and benefits of citizenship; they have witnessed economic growth, but have not necessarily been able to find work; they have participated in development projects that have not necessarily delivered improved standards of living; and they have voted in elections without experiencing democracy, according to Daniel Branch in this book. The book explores Kenyan politics from the time of the first president Kenyatta, through the time of the second president Moi, up to the present time of the third president Kibaki. In the early days the struggle was between the political elite and those like Oginga Odinga who wanted to redistribute the wealth. After a while the struggle was simply between different factions in the political elite who wanted to seize power and feather their own nests. Remarkably, the author does not hesitate to detail instances of corruption and criminal conduct and name names, given the propensity of the Kenyan elite to sue for defamation. Former National Security Minister Chris Murungaru is currently suing KTN for defamation over the allegation that he was a drug kingpin. Former Minister of Trade and Industry Nicholas Biwott was awarded \$750,000 for defamation over the allegation that he murdered Robert Ouko. President Kibaki has publicly threatened defamation proceedings against anyone who claims he is a polygamist. All of these

allegations and many more appear in the book. Perhaps the author has greater confidence in the independence of the current judiciary. Although the book's title suggests that Kenya fluctuates between hope and despair, the abiding impression gained by the reader is more on the side of despair. If the author is correct in suggesting that the Moi regime had a deliberate policy of provoking violence in order to justify the repressive measures taken to stifle dissent and maintain its grip on power, then that helps to explain the country's decline in GDP per capita between 1980 and 2002. The book focuses on politics to the exclusion of other aspects of Kenya's recent history such as poverty, health, culture and significant non-political events. Nevertheless it provides a very useful and uncensored overview of how the country's governance has reached its current condition.

I lived in Kenya 1984-86 and so this book brought back many memories, both of leaders, the forgotten of a previous generation of leaders and western scholars as well. During the time I was there we all knew the country was not a democracy, all knew we needed to be very careful about what we said. Thanks to this book, I know now the truth was even worse than we feared. We had it pointed out to us where the screams of those tortured could be heard, we heard stories about how they did the torture. Branch fills out the context. One of my colleagues at the University was carted off by the secret police for writing pamphlets, thanks to Branch I know he served 4 years and survived it. The subtitle seems accurate: we always saw Kenya as a glass simultaneously being filled up and draining out: a place that should prosper but wasn't. This is a political history, that is his goal. In recounting politics he has to spend more time on despair than hope. The hope us expatriates had, those of us who had fallen in love with Kenya, was based not on the "wabenzi" tribe of the elite but on the "wananchi" rank and file who were cheerful, welcoming and taught us all so many things in a country breathtakingly beautiful. I fear that a history of Kenya written 20 years from now will have the same plot. But it shouldn't.

As a frequent traveler to East Africa, with over 40 trips to Kenya in the last 17 years, I can say that I have seen some of this story first hand, up close and personal through the eyes of participants. Kenya is between hope and despair. If you want to know more - read the book. It is both sad and hopeful too.

I thank Mr Branch and all the resources that informed this work which has significantly enhanced my understanding of my country, Kenya.

outstanding, well documented, thorough.a page turner. have read it twice and will read it again before my next and 5th tripto Kenya.

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