

## THE PLACE OF HOME GUARDS IN KENYAN HISTORY: A CASE OF KIAMBU COUNTY, KENYA 1945 – 1992

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### ABSTRACT

Kenya's colonial historiography invokes continual intellectual curiosity centred on the Mau uprising. Ironically, this historiography ignores Home Guards, (also known as Agikuyu Home Guards), a critical group that opposed Mau incursions and pushed them to obscurity. This study examines the place of Home Guards; a quasi-military groups that morphed into counterinsurgents and its impact on colonial and post-colonial history. This study was conducted in Lari sub-county, an area that witnessed the Lari Massacre of 1953; a corollary of antagonism between the Guards and freedom fighters. The study applied social conflict theory to argue that Home Guards were motivated by economic incentives, mainly to protect the interests of colonial administrators and elite African loyalists. This study used both primary and secondary sources. Archival data obtained from the Kenya National Archives (KNA), and oral history obtained through face-to-face and focus group interviews. The study found that the Home Guards in Kiambu County evolved as a counterinsurgency to African resistance to colonial rule, primarily established to suppress and counteract resistance. After independence, Home Guards transitioned from a colonial era quasi-military force to take on various roles, including community policing and border security. Research findings indicated that the perception of Home Guards in Kiambu County varies among different people. Some viewed them as protectors, while others viewed them as oppressors, highlighting the complex nature of their existence. The study revealed that the legacy and memory of the Home Guards in Kiambu County continued to shape local narratives and perceptions with their role in history and the impact they had creating enduring effects on collective memory.

**KEYWORDS:** Place, Role, Home Guards, History.

### 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The presence of Home guards in the political space of British colonialism was not only widespread in both colonial and post-colonial periods, but is also a significant factor in the making of African history. Home guards were counter insurgency groups that either worked for colonial entrenchment or for their personal survival. This was true of the rise of home guards to counter the Mau rebellion in the 1950s and later during the post-independence period in Kenya. That is why Kinyatti (1991) remarked that, the Mau liberation struggle was bitter, and the benefits did not always accrue to those who bore the brunt of the war. Home Guards and Mau fighters developed a ferocious enmity because they believed that some people had taken advantage of others. That very hatred would later be passed down to generations in some parts of central Kenya. The Home Guards lived a luxurious life; their children went to good schools and got better employment while the rest of the Africans languished in abject poverty.

Clearly, very few studies have highlighted the role played by some members of the Home Guard unit in aiding the success of Mau insurgency in different areas in central Kenya. The literature available presents Home Guards as subjects of colonial aggression or regression, as rigid collaborators during the period of the state of emergency between 1952 and 1957, or as gluttonous social-political power brokers immediately after independence and, who excessively reaped from where they never sowed. That is why Branch (2009) observed that, "as many Agikuyu fought with the colonial government as did those against it." This statement explains the civil nature of the Mau insurgency. It tore the Agikuyu community right through the middle, pitting members of the family against each other, and neighbours against neighbours. This fact places Mau insurgency as a contest between two erstwhile

enemies domiciled within same neighbourhoods. Indeed, it is within this division that the British colonial government designed the post-colonial state of Kenya. It was for this reason that the two groups tried their best to outdo each other, sometimes using the most vicious and cruel ways they could muster with the ultimate price for each of these groups being to gain socio-economic and political power.

Mathiu (2013), in a commentary conducted in a local daily, argued that, the country reluctant to acknowledge the Mau Mau's contribution to the liberation of our nation and "Instead, it gives national honours to Home Guards, politicians, civil servants and their relatives...." Despite the glaring need to heal the antagonism between these two groups, the political class has not shied from provoking the debate pitting Home Guards against Mau fighters. The assumption has always been that Home Guards are still adamant to grant descendants of the Mau fighters their rightful place in social, political, and economic realms. It is against this background that an examination of the place of Home guards in Kenyan history with a particular reference to Kiambu, 1945 to 1992, therefore, proceeds.

The history of the origin and presence of the Home Guards as a counter-insurgency measure both to the Mau rebellion and later in post-independent Kenya helps to trace their place in the social, political and economic spheres in Kenya. This study has reviewed the evolution of the Home Guards' unit from the villages of central Kenya villages, plunging the movement into national limelight in the country and beyond. A special focus on the review of this evolution was cast on Lari sub-county in Kiambu county, 1945-1992.

### **The Need to Understand the Place of Home Guards in Kenyan History**

A lot of literature is available on the impact of Home guards on Kenyan history. However, an analysis of the impact of Home guards in Lari- Kiambu is not well documented. Similar studies have been done elsewhere and ignored this particular area and in that case, it exposes a study on the place of Home guards in Lari-Kiambu to generalized works. This study, therefore, focuses on how Home guards in Lari-Kiambu have succeeded in shaping Kenyan history. By addressing this question, the study serves to expand knowledge on the impact of Home guards in Kenyan history, generally and Lari in Kiambu in particular.

It will serve as a reference for government officials, academics, civil society organizations, public institutions, and other people who are interested in dealing with the role of Home guards in Kenya's history. The findings of this research will provide valuable information to policymakers in Kiambu and in other parts of Kenya, and contributes to the development of government policy. This study, although with a focus on the history of Home guards in Kiambu, Kenya, the findings may be generalised to other regions in Africa, Asia and the general Third World that had similar colonial policies that favoured this cadre of people within the colonial set-up.

In sum, this study offers a vital lens through which to understand the enduring influence of colonial history on modern Kenya's legacy. Such comprehension is pivotal in fostering unity and harmonious coexistence within the nation. By delving into this subject, the study aims to address pressing contemporary issues in Kenya, including reconciliation, justice, and transitional justice mechanisms. This, in turn, aligns with government initiatives focused on reconciliation and national cohesion.

## **2. MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This study was conducted in Lari sub-county with the Kiambu county. The area is both a political unit and an administrative unit since 1966. It is bordered by several sub-counties including Kinangop, Limuru, Githunguri, Gatundu South and Naivasha. It is divided into five administrative wards namely Kamburu, Kijabe central, Kinale, Kirenga and Nyanduma (Kamau,2010). The sub-county has a land area of 439.2 square kilometres and a population density of 282 persons per square kilometre (KNBS, 2009), the least populated sub-county.

In terms of this investigation, this place had distinct advantages. To begin with, missionary-trained Kenyans from the Kiambu region were among the first to organize political associations in the 1920s. Three decades later, Lari sub-county was one of the main centres of different Mau activities that eventually prompted the declaration of the state of emergency in Kenya. The infamous Lari massacre took place in 1953 after Mau fighters attacked loyalists and Home Guard members, killing in the process about 200 people in a cruel attack later referred to as the "*night of long knives*, out of whom 13 were members of the Chief Luka Kahangara family (Elkins, 2005)." This incident qualified the area as a critical location for reliable information relating to the organisation and the roles of Home Guards that marked deep division between them and the Mau fighters.

Lying next to the Aberdare ranges, the area was also close to the caves in the forest where the Mau fighters hid after carrying out their offensives. The Lari area is basically rural where majority of the Home Guards and Mau fighters lived. The study used both primary and secondary sources. Sampling, a questionnaire and direct observation was employed.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### BACKGROUND TO THE PLACE OF HOME GUARDS IN KENYAN HISTORY.

A number of researchers have studied the origins of Home Guards, often attributing it to a struggle to obtain favour during colonialism. Pagden (1998) argues that, the history of European imperialism and colonisation of the world is long and winding, tracing back to the Age of Discovery when Portugal and Spain emerged as leading countries in world exploration. These European amalgams dominated the lands and high waters of Africa, Southeast Asia, East Asia, Pacific and the Americas, leading to establishment of colonized enclaves that acted as their extraction props for mercantilism, and that created immense material wealth for the metropole. This scenario was very evident in Kenya.

By 1900, the impact of European influence in central Kenya had become increasingly evident. European settlers began to establish a presence in the Kenyan highlands (Maxon, 2009). Lari had traditionally been inhabited and dominated by members of the Agikuyu community. However, European perceptions of the Agikuyu at that time were often influenced by stereotypes and misconceptions. Maxon, in his work, described the Agikuyu as "the wild and savage Agikuyu into whose country no one dare enter" (2009). This characterization reflected the stereotypes and prejudices prevalent in colonial discourse during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Such derogatory views were used to justify colonial policies and actions, including land confiscation and the imposition of colonial authority shaping the course of Kenya's colonial history and its eventual path to independence.

The Agikuyu community practised agriculture and held dearly two strong views on land. First, they considered land, *ithaka*, to be a direct gift from God; *Mwenenyaga*. Land was thus a divine gift. Secondly, they highly valued land, *mugunda*, as a source of wealth and a measure of wealth (Elkins, 2005). The community therefore, considered the occupation of their fertile land by Europeans, particularly the British as an affront and a provocation, an act of desecrating their God-given gift and a ploy to economically impoverish them.

Two key factors influenced the shift of African resistance in the third and fourth decade of colonial rule in the colony. First, the First World War that broke out in Europe in the mid of 1914 quickly expanded to colonies controlled by European powers. According to Darwin (2009), "there was extensive and massive recruitment of soldiers in Africa to serve in the British forces and augment their fighting fronts with army conscripts enlisted into the King's African Rifles (KAR)." The second factor that drove the change of tact in African resistance was the administrative transposition of Kenya from a protectorate to a colony (Elkins, 2010); automatically became an overseas province of the British Empire.

The situation was complicated by a campaign that saw migration of new European settlers who moved into the colony and occupied fertile African lands, leaving many Africans to wallow in infertile, wasteland (Elkins, 2005, 19). The desperation was exacerbated by Africans being prohibited from growing cash crops. These two factors led to a new form of resistance through formation of political associations and movements.

Colonial resistance in Kenya has a complex history. This is due in great part to the presence of missionaries and then British colonial administrators, who provoked varied attitudes from Africans. These attitudes included total rejection or measured rejection, total acceptance or measured acceptance, or in other instances, a mixture of intermittent acceptance and resistance. Some of the earliest political associations were formed by Agikuyu chiefs and mission-educated young men. As Wamagatta (2016) observes, "In 1920, a group of local chiefs in central Kenya formed the Kikuyu Association (KA)." He notes that:

*"Almost from the beginning it had had the support of the missions in the area who had helped it with the framing and the translation of official letters. Although its secretaries tended to be mission educated Agikuyu, there was something of an anomaly in the fact that four of its most senior members were government paid headmen or chiefs."*

Some of the colonial chiefs who supported Kikuyu Association (KA) included senior chief Waruhiu wa Kungu, paramount chief Josiah Njonjo Mugane, chief Philip James Karanja and senior chief Koinange wa Mbiyu (Wamagatta, 2006). All these were prominent colonial chief drawn from Kiambu area. Top among the objectives of the KA was to help the colonial government with people who were evading payment of hut and poll tax

introduced in 1902 and 1903 (Clough, 1990). Africans considered these taxes excessive and thus, did not pay them promptly and regularly as demanded by the British colonial government and the loyalist chiefs. It was therefore given that these officials of KA were enthusiastic in this enforcement and wanted to ensure Africans total compliance with payment of the taxes. Evidently, such an objective spoke to the subtle collaborative nature of the Kikuyu Association and the colonial government.

Harry Thuku emerged as among the founder members of KA but he later broke ranks with the group and formed the Young Kikuyu Association (YKA), which did everything to rival KA (Wamagatta, 2016). Thuku was a missionary-educated young man and advocated for non-militant resistance. YKA would later morph into East Africa Association (EAA) that eventually forged alliances with other associations including the Young Kavirondo Association (YKA) led by Archdeacon Walter Edwin Owen (Maxon, 2009). Owen was one of the few Europeans in the colony who was bold enough to join hands with the locals and protest unjust colonial policies, at least in Nyanza region. Despite its wide appeal, the EAA was proscribed within a year by the British colonial administration. However, in 1924, the EAA re-emerged as Kikuyu Central Association (KCA).

The fight for Kenyan independence took on a new dimension with the start of the Second World War. For a second time, Africans were once more conscripted into the Kenya African Rifles (KAR) to fight alongside British army officers. According to Killingray and Plaut (2010), Kenya was one of the most significant recruiting grounds for the British Army in Africa. During the conflict, the King's African Rifles added 98,240 new askaris from Kenya, making up 30% of the army's total strength. "Kenyan soldiers joined forces from West Africa in the invasion of Vichy-controlled Madagascar, the successful East African campaign against the Italians, and also the Burma Campaign against the Japanese." (Ibid)

After the war was over, Kenyan soldiers returned to home, but racial segregation took precedence in matters of compensation. African soldiers never received any of the many promises they had been given before they left for the big war (Maloba, 1998). After weeks of unending negligence, frustration and suffering, former KAR soldiers drawn mainly from central Kenya formed a military force which they named Kenya Land and Freedom Army (KLFA). This group was created as an intensified resistance against colonial rule and unfair treatment of Africans. Accordingly, the rebellion that came to be known as the Mau became primarily an uprising of Kenyan peasants, drawn from the central province, who were against the colonial state, its policies, and its agents (Ibid).

The decision to form an armed resistance group was preceded by an oath intended to bring the community together. The importance of oath-taking in the birth of Mau resistance could not be disputed. When the community was "threatened by the colonial government with yet another eviction, sometime around 1943, the Olenguruone residents radicalized the traditional Agikuyu practice of oath-taking" (Elkins, 2005, 49). With the outbreak of the Mau insurgency, KLFA fighters were bound and motivated by this oath. Maxon (2009) emphasized significance of oaths in Mau Mau's militancy and securing early support for the insurgency.

The British did not have the numbers needed to restrain a restive African population determined to reassert their social, economic, and political order. To create leverage and a security buffer, they activated the policy of divide-and-rule (Christopher, 1988). A customization of the policy involved incorporating mostly loyal chiefs and headmen to fight against the growing rebellion. They also formed a unit named Home Guard unit based in Kiambu, Nyeri, Murang'a and other major urban centres in central Kenya. The unit was more of a paramilitary group composed of colonial loyalists and sympathisers (Ibid). The Agikuyu Guard was formed from several hundred tribal police and private armies created by loyalist leaders in the wake of the Mau attacks, according to Elkins (2005). The unit's establishment exacerbated hostility in central Kenya.

Mau fighters increased their offensive targeting members of the Home Guard unit, their relatives and property (Branch, 2009). An event that happened in the month of October 1952 led to demand for a tough stance against the members of the Mau group. The immediate trigger to the unprecedented response from the colonial government was the daring shooting dead of the favourite colonial Senior Chief Waruhiu wa Kung'u. This assassination was carried out on 7th October 1952. As Edgerton (1989) noted, the senior chief was ambushed and fatally shot in his car during the day. Because of the increased threat that Mau fighters continued to pose, it prompted the colonial government to make a declaration of a state of emergency in the country in October 1952 (Ibid).

The cruel death of the colonial African chief marked a turning point in African insurgency against British rule in Kenya. Equally critical, the British colonial government response underscored the official colonial position on the activities of the group and their desire to continue the imperial hegemony that had been imposed in the colony for

over half a decade. Edgerton (1989) observed that “the assassination of Senior Chief Waruhiu gave the colonial governor the final impetus to request permission from the Colonial Office to declare a state of emergency.” To keep KLFA fighters under constant check, the colonial administrators kept strengthening the home guard force by soaring its number of fighters (Ibid). By 1953, the British colonial administration had created eighty-four security posts and enlisted about 4620 men into the Home Guard unit (KNA, 1952).

#### **4. EVOLUTION OF HOME GUARDS AS A RESPONSE TO AFRICAN RESISTANCE TO COLONIAL RULE IN KIAMBU COUNTY 1945 - 1992**

##### **Historical Evolution of Home Guards’ unit 1945 - 1951**

Kenya became a British colony on 23rd July 1920 (Brennan, 2008). Before this, the country was a British protectorate under the rulership of a chartered business company, the Imperial British East African Company (IBEACO) led by Sir William Mackinnon (Ibid). The African political sensitivity in the country began around this time which is when Kenya was declared a British colony. As Sinclair (2000) observed, the change from a protectorate to a colony meant that the country was now an extension of the British empire, making it a specific province of the British political and economic dominion. In effect, this meant that Kenya was an overseas province of Britain. It is this change that alarmed the elite Africans and spurred them to respond through formation of socio-political associations. Some of the earliest formed associations included Agikuyu central Association (KCA), East African Association (EAA), Kenya African Union (KAU), Ukambani Members Association (UMA), Taita Hills Association (THA), Kavirondo Taxpayers Welfare Association (KTWA) among others. These associations were mostly regional based and did not have a national appeal. However, their grievances were largely identical.

Between 1914 and November 1918 when the World War I was heavily fought in the European battlefields, some Kenyans were successfully enlisted into the King’s African Rifles (KAR) where they served as soldiers protecting British interests in the country and especially on Taveta, which was on the border between British East Africa (BEA) and German East Africa (Page, 2011). It was in the same war that the KAR regiment fought in German East Africa (GEA) where their main opponents were Germans and their allies fighting on African soil. However, in the World War II, KAR soldiers found themselves fighting against the Italians in Ethiopia and Italian Somaliland (Ibid). The Kenyan fighters in the war fought with great courage and success and earned accolades from their British commanders. Although Kenyan soldiers usually served as couriers and subordinate members of the army, they still suffered immensely and many of them lost their lives. Sadly, the lucky African soldiers who made it back home were not rewarded as promised during the recruitment (Ibid). This act of betrayal did not dampen the spirits of the soldiers who had served in the army. Even where the promises were not kept, it seemed the adventure and the pride of defending the British against an erstwhile enemy was enough satisfaction.

During the World War II that happened between 1939 and 1945, more Kenyans were once again enlisted into the King’s African Rifles (KAR) rank-and-file, according to Parsons (2015). This number was higher than the number of Kenyans who had been recruited to serve during the World War I. According to Chappell (2005), quoting official records, at the start of the World War I, there were “2325 Africans serving in the KAR on the British side.” By the time the war came to its end in 1918, there were over 30,000 Africans who were involved directly in the war. In contrast, by the end of the World War II, African ex-soldiers numbered a little more than 98000 (Kenyan National Archives, June 1945). Africans’ involvement in both world wars had made them become bold and aggressive in their demand for their freedom and land largely due to the skills gained and the enlightenment that came with the experience.

According to Anderson (2011), this group of Agikuyu ex-servicemen decided to create an association which they named the *40-Group* in 1946. The 40-Group returnees’ group was locally known as by the moniker *Aanake a Forty*, literally meaning the *Young Men of 40*. This group was in reference to the year 1940 when most of the young and energetic men from central Kenya were drafted into the KAR to fight in the World War II (Clough, 1998). The association was founded to protect the interests of over 75,000 Kenyans who had heroically fought for Britain in the KAR against the Italians in Ethiopia and the Japanese in Burma.

Anderson (2006) continues to point out that the African members of the King’s African Rifles (KAR) found themselves unemployed and their living conditions unacceptable upon returning to the country after the World War II came to an end. This reality was a big contrast to the life they were used to serving in the KAR. While the Home Guards became prominent during the state of emergency, historical evidence points to the group existing even before the insurgency broke out in 1952. As in other parts of the country, it was the Tribal Police unit supposed to provide security to the people under the British colonial government in central Kenya. Their engagement in the region was similar to engagements in other parts of the colony.

Usually, members of the Tribal Police were recruited from young men in their respective regions. According to Elkins (2005), "there existed the Tribal Police from the late 1920s which was a loyalist organisation composed mostly of sons and close relatives of chiefs and headmen." The work of the Tribal Police was largely to maintain law, enforce order, to collect taxes on behalf of the colonial headmen and chiefs, and to punish wrongdoers. The Home Guards' unit traces its origins to the Tribal Police unit (Ibid). Elkins (2005), holds that the emergence of the loyalists "dates back to the 1920s, although their formal acceptance as a socio-political class was during the Mau struggle." Before 1945, the Home Guards' unit existed but not as a pseudo-military force. This was drastically changed when the state of emergency was declared in the country in October 1952.

The first members of the unit were initially errand boys for the African sub-chiefs and chiefs (Ibid). Progressively, their roles were expanded to match the rising security needs in central Kenya. The village headmen and chiefs at different times had to rely on village warriors or tough youths to enforce the colonial government's policies and to arbitrate native matters due to the unpopularity of the policies (Hansard, 1937). However, it was in the year 1929 when the Tribal Police Ordinance was enacted to give legal backing to the Native Police and their training was taken up by the respective regional agents, most of whom had a military background (Ibid).

The Home Guards' unit drew membership from different people in the community. The first group comprised the Christians who considered the Mau fighters to be evil and outcasts that needed to be wiped from amongst the good people (Elkins, 2005). Headmen, sub-chiefs and chiefs and their children also worked closely together to form home guard units in their areas of jurisdiction. Lonsdale (1990) and Branch (2009) both observed that chiefs freely enlisted members of the home guard unit "Among wanderers and those who had joined Mau under duress, creating the Agikuyu Guard by a similar mix of threat and persuasion. Recruits had to prove themselves with public confession and a traditional oath of cleansing." This view is further underscored by Branch (2009) who observed that, "Only 10 percent of recruits who joined the Home Guard were motivated principally by their hatred of Mau."

The affluent and educated Africans who were primary recipients of the British colonial administration similarly contributed to the Home Guards' unit (Elkins, 2005). This band of Home Guards teamed up with some freebooters who had little to offer in terms of dignity or social standing, and they were accused of perpetrating the most heinous crimes (Ibid). It was typical for members of this group to pillage and abuse individuals with complete impunity.

Because of the continued persecution of Mau fighters by the Home Guards, sometimes members of the Mau insurgency joined the Home Guards ranks. Usually, they did this to protect their property or their lives. As Elkins (2005) noted, "These were usually old people who could not run away to the forest to fight and who also had something to protect." These crossovers from Mau to Home Guards was most of the times a strategic move by the fighters. First, such a surrender helped them to infiltrate the Home Guards' unit and gather intelligence they needed. Secondly, despite not being actively involved as Mau fighters, the group was critical in supporting the insurgency in that at times, they managed to provide Mau fighters with critical materials including blankets and food, and intelligence especially regarding the positions of the British army personnel and colonial administrators (Ibid).

With the rising political temperatures in central Kenya, insecurity continued to pose a direct threat to the local colonial sympathisers and supporters who included headmen and chiefs. This forced some chiefs like Senior Chief Njiiri Karanja, one of the most vocal anti-Mau Mau chiefs in Murang'a, to form the first Home Guard unit in Murang'a (Elkins, 2005). Colonial chiefs and other administrators had everything to lose if the Mau insurgency became successful. They did all that was within their means and beyond to frustrate the efforts of the fighters. According to Lonsdale (1990), "Chiefs enlisted among waverers and those who had joined Mau under duress, creating the Agikuyu Guard by a similar mix of threat and persuasion. Recruits had to prove themselves with public confession and a traditional oath of cleansing."

Most Agikuyu Guard formations contained a sizable number of ex-Mau Mau fighters. Insurgents also exploited the early months to gather and reinforce their forces, mainly by forming larger organizations with stronger oaths among the members. Unfortunately, this conscious or unconscious strengthening of opposing factions meant that an intra-Agikuyu conflict was growing in the once calm and serene hills and valleys occupied by the Agikuyu people. However, many on both sides sought to avoid fighting their brothers and relatives in the larger conflict that had slowly evolved into a local feud. Unfortunately, the Agikuyu Guard members ended up killing more Mau members than any other group, and their cruelty earned them a terrible reputation in some locations (Lonsdale, 1990).

The structure of leadership among the Home Guards' units had the British colonial administrators at the top of the hierarchy while African headmen and chiefs worked closely with the Home Guards in the respective areas. Branch (2009) noted that Home Guards were directly answerable to the European district commissioners, district officers and chiefs. On the top of this hierarchy, Colonel Philip Morcombe was the head of the home guard unit (Elkins, 2005). This hierarchy was necessary for controlling their relationship with the Mau fighters, as there was genuine fear that some Home Guards were sympathisers of the Mau fighters. The hierarchy also supported marshalling of loyalty in the group. The structure was also maintained for the training of Home Guards since the loyal Africans were considered naïve and incapable of forming Home Guard units (Branch, 2009)."

To maintain support from the Home Guards' unit, the British colonial administration gave the Home Guards rewards and promises of such things as access to free education for their children and loans to invest in agriculture and businesses. Such rewards and promises, according to Elkins (2005), "Turned the Home Guards into a ruthless force to carry out the administration's orders, especially in eliminating the Mau adherents." The carrot and stick strategies were applied for obvious reasons. As Kershaw (1997) observed,

"So many home guard members were Mau activists. Mau was not necessarily bad and Home Guards were not necessarily good. Whatever a man or woman had become seemed logical, given the situation. For those who knew enough, becoming a home guard might be a rational thing to do, but so might taking an oath...situations changed constantly: The Mau members became a home guard, the home guard took an oath. Both belonged to the same kin-group and there was little to differentiate them."

It was this understanding that made the British colonial government to try everything within its powers to see a shift of allegiance during the course of the war, with Mau fighters opting to surrender and making the crossover of the thin moral line between the Mau fighters and Home Guards, and they would swell the ranks of the Home Guards units hoping to benefit from what they could not get from the lonely days in the forests.

#### **The Role of Home Guards During the State of Emergency, 1952 - 1957**

In central Kenya, the Home Guards' unit was also known as the Agikuyu Guards (Elkins, 2005). Under the British colonial administration, the colonial chiefs were allowed to engage loyal locals to support their work which included collection of taxes, recruitment of labour for the European settlers and running errands for the headmen and chiefs. Mostly, Home Guards were used to collect taxes on behalf of the chiefs and to punish wrongdoers in the society.

In central Kenya, as a strategy to contain the aggressiveness of the Agikuyu, Elkins (2005) notes that the colonial administration introduced the concept of villagization. During this operation, the entire population was relocated to communities enclosed by a large furrow with sharpened sticks planted at the bottom and sides of the furrow. Tribal Police and Home Guards strongly secured these communities, and there was only one access to the villages. In this situation, the duty of Home Guards was to implement the policy of *villagisation* and ensure its ultimate success in keeping the Mau fighters at bay. Some of the house guards were assigned to watch the solitary entry to these villages (Ibid).

The Home Guards used their newly found importance to exert themselves in social and economic spheres. The political sphere was largely left to the dominion of the colonial headmen and chiefs, and the Home Guards did not wish to challenge that order. However, as Elkins (2005) observed, during the state of emergency period, "it was only the traders who were members of the Agikuyu Home Guard that were issued with trading licences." For example, the Agikuyu Guard and active loyalists controlled the whole wattle trade, and hence all wattle revenue flowed to them (Ibid). This clearly demonstrates that in the period preceding the state of emergency, during the state of emergency and even after the state of emergency was suspended, the Home Guards maintained a singularly revered place as local traders within the local economies where their dominance was unchallenged.

The Home Guards did not waste any minute in taking advantage of their placement in the local villages. Their reign was usually laden with sustained corruption, with the Mau fighters being the direct recipients of this corruption and brutality. Elkins (2005) observed that the home guard leaders were corrupt people who went around collecting and pocketing levies and fees that they imposed on the local people, and they also confiscated livestock including cows, sheep, goat and other poultry including chicken when people could not raise the levies and fees imposed. They had a penchant of targeting the property of real and imagined Mau fighters and sympathisers. This corruption was usually conducted with the blessings of the headmen and chiefs who "had sheep and goat pens in every sub-location which contained livestock earmarked for them." (Ibid)

Communal punishments were imposed on the villagers as a way of enforcing corrupt amassing of wealth by the Home Guards and their masters, including the headmen and chiefs. In situations where a chief's household was attacked either by Mau fighters or their sympathisers, it was common for heavy fines to be imposed on each household within the locality with the target being the households which the leading head of the family was not a known member of the Home Guard unit (Elkins, 2005). This collective punishment contributed to those who would have taken neutral stands to choose the side to support.

The infamous state of emergency in Kenya was declared on 20th October 1952 by the newly appointed British governor, Sir Evelyn Baring, who had been appointed Governor of Kenya earlier that same year to succeed the departing governor, Sir Philip Mitchell. Sir Baring was no stranger to British imperialism. He was the son of Lord Cromer, famously known as the '*Maker of Modern Egypt*' (Elkins, 2005). With Sir Baring coming to the helm at a time of restiveness in the colony, it was not surprising that after declaring the state of emergency, he went on to launch Operation Jock Scott, which targeted alleged Mau leaders (Leander, 2013).

The period between 1952 to 1957 was heavily dictated by the consequences that succeeded the proclamation of the state of emergency in central Kenya and other parts of the country as announced by the new governor of the British colony (Brob-Fitzgibbon, 2016). One of the reasons that prompted Sir Evelyn to go ahead and impose a state of emergency was the increased aggression by Mau fighters in central Kenya especially in areas bordering major forests including Mt. Kenya and Aberdare Ranges (Ibid). The state of emergency in Kenya was synonymous with unchecked brutality and untold cruelty. Elkins (2005) observed that "The history of the emergency period in Kenya is full of shocking, brutal treatment of the Mau followers by the British Military Forces, KAR, Police, Prison Wardens, Tribal Police, Kenya Police Reserve and Agikuyu Tribal Police and Home Guard units." The Mau fighters and their followers suffered greatly because of these colonial excesses that were applied in almost all sectors of African lives. In a clearly remarkable manoeuvre, the Home Guards exploited their close ties to the British administrators which came with donated powers, real or perceived, and they took active roles in suppressing and snuffing out hope and life from the Mau combatants throughout the period of the state of emergency.

One factor gave the Home Guards a competitive edge as they pushed their quest to subdue and subjugate the Mau fighters, whom they considered terrorists, *itoi*, and their relatives. In this war of attrition, the Home Guards were on the right side of power and authority, and they had good knowledge of the Mau fighters since they were usually their immediate relatives and neighbours (Elkins, 2005). This made it extremely easy for them to pick the fighters or their relatives out. This familiarity of the protagonists presented the Home Guards undue advantage which they used to advance their goals of supporting the British colonial suppression of the insurgency. In the period spanning the life of the insurgency, the Tribal Police and Home Guards were reported to have captured 4511 Mau fighters in battle on Agikuyu, Embu, and Meru territories (Elkins, 2005). They did, however, suffer casualties among their ranks. According to official reports, 63 Tribal Police members and 686 house guards were killed in the central province. 409 people were injured (Ibid)

There is a less discussed role played by Home Guards during the colonial period, especially in the period between 1952 and 1957. While the conflict was going on, some units of the Home Guards conspired with Mau insurgents into a truce that was intended to keep the local peace (Lonsdale, 1990). This truce usually meant that, "Conversely, Mau leaders claimed to subjugate violence to the social audit of local communities which would have to live with the aftermath of murder." (Ibid) At the state of emergency, some members of the Home Guard unit supported the cause of the Mau fighters albeit discreetly. Several reasons can be given to explain this double life of several Home Guards. First, the Mau fighters were members of their families, some close family members like brothers, cousins and uncles, or distant relatives and in-laws. They were their blood relatives. This made the Home Guards at times reluctant to attack the Mau fighters.

In a report contained in the Colony and Protectorate of Kenya (1961), the authors surmised, "The Home Guard members lived in constant fear of attack, bravely repelling the invading Mau hordes that periodically descended from the forests." This was one of the outstanding reasons why the Home Guards worked secretly with the Mau fighters as emphasised by Branch (2005). The Mau fighters were known to be brutal and cruel, and especially to the Home Guards who they saw as betrayers of their cause. Out of fear of being attacked and killed by the Mau fighters, Home Guards usually acted as double agents. They were informers for the Mau fighters and at times helped to supply them with guns and ammunition. This double life, in a way, supported their safety.



The important contribution of the Home Guards in advancing the existence of the Mau rebellion has been ignored by historians and this takes away the credit the Home Guards deserve. As Elkins (2005) observed, some Home Guards were “those who were Mau at heart but Home Guards in appearance. It had become necessary for some Mau followers to *surrender* and become Home Guards.” This was more of a survival tactic. This tactical surrender by this group of Mau fighters was intended to “protect their property or their lives.” (Ibid) The Mau fighters who employed this strategy were usually “old people who could not run away to the forest to fight and who also had something to protect.” However, even in their service as Home Guards, they usually “supplied the Mau fighters with materials and information.” (Nganga, 1978)

Another critical role played by the Home Guards during the state of emergency was how they were used by the British colonial law enforcers to arrest suspected Mau supporters. Sometimes, these arrests were carried out with a lot of discrimination as all it took was to be in the wrong books of the Home Guards to be considered a Mau sympathizer. As Elkins (1978) observed, some Home Guards used this privilege to accuse local people who they had grudges with and ended up orchestrating their arrest and eventual imprisonment. Such grudges included disputes over land, wives, children and contests relating to positions of authority (Ibid).

As the battle between the Mau fighters and colonial armed forces continued, the Home Guards became reliable as forest trackers. They were used to track Mau fighters in the deep ends of the Aberdare Forest, Uplands Forest, Kereita Forest, Kinale Forest, Kamae Forest and parts of the large Agikuyu Escarpment Forest. They worked very closely with British army personnel to undertake this role. The tracking role was assigned to the Home Guards from the fact that most of the Home Guards were familiar with local terrain. First, the members of the unit were usually deployed in their native areas, and secondly, their engagement with those forests included economic activities like hunting and gathering which made them quite familiar with the forests (Ibid). As trackers, the Home Guards were critical in supporting the advancement of the war to forests. This strategy was applied parallel to the bombings carried out by Royal Air Force. It is for such a role that locally, the Home Guards were dismissed as the running dogs for the British army (Kinyatti, 1991).

When the colonial government embarked on the villagisation project, the Home Guards were made part and parcel of the project. They were deployed to enforce the villagisation project in central Kenya. One of the main roles the Home Guards played in the project was a supervisory role where they oversaw digging of trenches around the African villages. As Elkins (2005) observed, “The population was put in villages surrounded by a big furrow with sharpened sticks planted at the bottom and sides of the furrow. These villages were heavily guarded by Tribal Police and Home Guards and they had only one entrance.” In those African villages, the role of Home Guards was amplified since they were very reliable in tracking out real and imagined Mau contacts. This role made the Home Guards to be loathed and feared in equal measure. Within those African villages, they emerged as a law upon themselves.

Undeniably, the Home Guards were critical in provision of security in the villages. As the Mau burnt down the grass-thatched huts in Lari during the onset of the Lari Massacre, the Home Guards were in their guard posts keeping guard (Elkins, 2005). They were thus critical in offering protection to the villagers especially at night through the home guard posts which they manned. Keeping the Mau fighters away from the villages was important in ensuring continuity of social life and economic activities. In a community where innocent people found themselves on the firing lines of both Home Guards and the Mau fighters, the Home Guards became a necessary evil. Despite their unfair treatment of the villagers and insatiable greed for property and authority, they managed to keep Mau fighters at bay.

Another important role played by the Home Guards was acting as translators for British interrogators whenever Mau fighters were captured. This was a privileged role, and it came from the fact that most of the Home Guards had received elementary education and were considered well versed in the language of the British colonial masters (Elkins, 2005). Unfortunately, it was during such interrogations that the Home Guards were also used to torture Mau fighter to force information from them (Clough, 1998).

In the latter stages of the emergency, the Home Guards undertook the role of witnesses during the court trials of Mau fighters. As witnesses, the magistrates and judges usually relied on their accounts and records to jail the Mau dissidents (Branch, 2009). However, they usually used this role to settle scores they had with those they disagreed with, and it usually meant they would share false evidence to make sure that the suspected Mau dissidents would be incarcerated. Such an incarceration served two purposes: self-gratification in form of a conviction to an enemy, and a chance to earn further recognition within the levels of loyalism.

### **The Place of Home Guards After the State of Emergency, 1958 - 1962**

Around 1955, majority of the Home Guards were stood down while others were absorbed into the Tribal Police unit whose role was majorly protection of government buildings (Smith, 2003). This move was strategic for several reasons. First, the British colonial government deemed Home Guards to be very integral in their defeat of the Mau insurgency, which to a greater sense was now heading to its complete defeat. Secondly, the Home Guards were critical in veiling the British colonial officers' brutality against the Mau fighters during the state of emergency. This necessitated a mixed approach on how to deal with the group. Lastly, within the ranks of the British colonial administration, the British colonial government was aware that members of the unit had used excessive brutality against their fellow Africans. Home Guards absorbed into the group were critical in providing security to British colonial administrators especially the headmen, sub-chiefs and chiefs.

The intense military phase of the state of emergency in Kenya was lifted in 1956. By the time the emergency was lifted, the destruction in central Kenya was huge including loss of lives, destruction of property and crippling means of economic production (Elkins, 2005). Official figures of the people who lost lives were quite high with most of the casualties suffered by the Mau fighters in comparison to the loyalists and members of the Home Guards' unit. There were 11,500 members of the Mau insurgency group killed compared to 1800 loyalists who lost their lives (Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, 1960). By any means, these numbers are modest as they did not capture the number of Mau fighters who were killed after the state of emergency was lifted, with some dying in detention camps and the fighting fronts after they refused to surrender. There is also the omission of the loyalists and Home Guards who went missing or were killed and their bodies never recovered.

With the continued and rising prospects of total defeat of the Mau insurgency, several Home Guards were rewarded for their role in fighting the insurgents by being absorbed into the British colonial administration. They served as headmen, sub-chiefs and chiefs, with growth opportunities presented to them since they could rise through the ranks of colonial administration.

By the time of lifting the state of emergency in 1956, the Home Guards' unit had been disbanded by the British colonial government because it was considered too brutal for the liking of the colonial administration (Elkins, 2005). In any event, the war intensity had gone down and their use as active militants was no longer important. The British colonial officials considered the actions of the Home Guards' unit to be a direct implication of their complacency and culpability.

### **The Place of Home Guards During the Kenyatta Presidency, 1963 - 1978**

Just before his ascension into power, Jomo Kenyatta had faced a lengthy period serving a prison in Lokitaung in the northwestern part of Kenya in today's Turkana County. As Maxon (2009) observed, Kenyatta and six others were arrested in October 1952, flown to Kapenguria, one of the most remote parts of the country, and tried on accusations of being key leaders of the Mau insurgency in the colony. They would be "found guilty in April 1953 and sentenced to seven years' hard labor (Maxon, 2009, 253).

Assensoh (1998) argued that British colonial authorities were completely aware that Jomo Kenyatta was not in any way involved in the Mau insurgency but were determined to silence his calls for independence which resonated with the demands of the insurgents. His view supports the argument that among the Kapenguria six, Kenyatta was a moderate unlike Bildad Kaggia, Paul Ngei and Kung'u Karumba who were considered radicals (Ibid). Immediately after the attainment of independence, well connected Home Guards became an exceptional group and occupied seats of influence in the first independence government (Assensoh, 1998).

There was genuine fear among the Home Guards when the country gained independence. The biggest fear was retribution from former Mau fighters (Elkins, 2005). The Home Guards feared that the Mau fighters, who they had subjected to endless suffering during the state of emergency, and whose property they had seized and destroyed, would come back forcefully and seek revenge. For this reason, some Home Guards moved to urban areas, veiled their dark past and started carrying out business and trading. They became notable businessmen and traders in urban places within their community and beyond (Ibid).

The elevation of Home Guards and the betrayal of Mau fighters was not lost even to the neutral observers and beneficiaries of the independence regime. Evidently, even for those who professed loyalty to the Kenyatta government and even beyond, there remained an expression of frustration and sometimes anger at the fact that the efforts of the Mau fighters have neither been recognized nor rewarded. In the words of the Mau fighters, they had been locked out of the house. Their desperation was best summarized by Japhlet Thambu, a former Mau general who lamented that "all of their land was taken by Home Guards, and the government of Kenyatta did not help

them. Those who had shambas had nothing left. Their coffee was uprooted. Whoever took the Mau oath could hardly come back to his land” (Huttenbach, 2015, 190).

As the country tinkered towards attainment of independence in 1963, some ambiguous Mau supporters and Home Guards morphed into prominent politicians and administrators edging closer to the new power barons (Angelo, 2020). As politicians, they vied for electoral positions and went on to become Members of Parliament (MPs), county and municipal council councillors, chairs and mayors in these administrative divisions in the postcolonial Kenya. Serving in the provincial administration, they were appointed district officers (DOs), District Commissioners (DCs) and served in other capacities within Kenyatta’s government. Some, like John Michuki and Eliud Mahihu, had served as colonial DOs, and they used their positions to suppress Mau insurgency. They would later emerge as powerful provincial administrators under Kenyatta’s government when the country achieved its independence (Ibid).

Other Home Guards joined non-protestant and protestant churches and became reknown elders and church ministers. They used the pulpit to preach reconciliation and forgiveness, endearing themselves into the hearts of the same people who had borne their brutality. They would use this position to scale into government administration and they went on to become provincial administrators, district commissioners, district officers, chiefs, sub-chiefs and headmen and headwomen in the provincial administration.

When Kenya gained independence in 1963, there was hope freedom fighters who risked their all to fight for independence would be recognized and rewarded. This did not happen. The newly installed government did not recognize the role of the Mau fighters in achieving the country’s independence. Kenyatta insisted that the Mau were hooligans. He declared in no uncertain terms when attending a rally in Githunguri, Kiambu, “We are determined to have independence in peace, and we shall not allow hooligans to rule Kenya. We must have no hatred towards one another. Mau was a disease which had been eradicated and must never be remembered again” (Geppert and Muller, 2015, 78).

For a leading figure in the Mau mobilization and command to make such a statement, it contradicted the very tenets of the Mau group at its formation in 1949 by the Nairobi Youth League, which was led by Paul Ngei, Fred Kubai and Bildad Kaggia. It also casted doubt on the true standing of Jomo Kenyatta about the Mau insurgency. Anderson (2017) used that Kenyatta’s statement to further a claim that at Kenya’s independence in 1963 after the British colonial government defeated the Mau fighters, those who rose to the ranks of power in the new African government were the loyalists who had supported the colonial government in its administration. This position is supported by other Mau scholars including Daniel Branch, John Lonsdale, Nicholas Githuku and Maina wa Kinyatti. Indeed, the upstaging of Mau fighters in the race to African governance at the turn of independence in 1963 is a matter has drawn long stares but invites less scrutiny.

These strongly worded statements by a person who would eventually become the first president of the newly independent nation, and who rode on the wave of championing the struggle for independence, not only underscored his disdain for the Mau fighters but also demonstrated to all and sundry that indeed he was an outsider among them. It remains for the revisionist historians of the Mau historiography, bearing the highest degree of fairness that such research may contemplate, to make a detailed evaluation of history to ascertain whether Jomo Kenyatta was a moderate loyalist, a dreaded radical or a fence-sitting opportunist.

In 1966, Kenyatta fell out with his Vice President Oginga Odinga largely due to what was presumed to be ideological differences. These differences included issues like land, ownership of property and the country’s international relationships. This fall out ushered tension and animosity between the Luo leaders and the Agikuyu leaders (Kinyatti, 1991). The tension was so high that in the same year, Oginga Odinga formed a party to directly oppose KANU. The party was named Kenya People’s Union (KPU). Among the members of the KPU was Bildad Kaggia, who believed that the Kenyatta government had been taken over by former Home Guards and the elites thus abandoning interests of the peasants, who were the Mau fighters (Ibid). According to Gathogo (2017), the Kenyatta government discreetly tried to administer an oath across central Kenya in 1969 in a bid to unite Home Guards and the Mau fighters against a common enemy, the Luo.

The other challenge that the Kenyatta government faced was the problem of the banditry war, infamously known as *shifita* war which took place in the then Northern Frontier District (NFD) (Laitin, 1977). The war was largely an attempted secession of Kenyan Somalis due to “sixty years of administrative isolation and political disenfranchisement of their region that made the NFD, which was a closed district that was created through a draconian legislation of 1926 and 1934 (Mburu, 1999). Possibly to right the wrongs, the British colonial

government, in its last days of colonial governance around 1960, made clear its intention to unite all Somali peoples into one territory with singular administration (Laitin, 1977). However, this did not happen as Britain eventually granted administration of the NFD to Kenya despite a referendum that showed the desire of the residents, who were exclusively Somali who wanted to join the newly formed Somalia Republic (Ibid).

This *shifita* war presented the right opportunity and the forum for the Kenyatta government to entrench use of Home Guards and thus cemented their place in the annals of post-colonial history. After the threat posed by the *shifita* war ebbed, the Home Guards remained a popular unit within different communities, especially where there were threats posed on the community members. Such threats included cattle rustling, banditry, ethnic conflicts and related challenges. Both government and opposition politicians at the time requested for deployment of Home Guards in their constituencies, while others requested for improved welfare of the Home Guards members.

During the Kenyatta presidency, three critical events shaped the relationship between the Mau veterans and their sympathisers on one hand, and the Home Guards and their supporters on the other. Indeed, these events marked the sharp division that existed between the two groups of archenemies. The first event happened in 1963. After independence, the Kenyatta government gave an amnesty to all Mau fighters and ordered them to down their weapons and leave the forests. However, this order did not sit well with some Mau fighters who felt shortchanged by the Kenyatta government. They wanted to continue agitating for their rights including land ownership. Field Marshal Marete Bairungi and his fighters remained in Mount Kenya forest threatening to continue fighting. Even after meeting the president, he was not convinced to surrender. He ended up being killed by government forces in 1966.

The second event was the continued humiliation of Bildad Kaggia by the Kenyatta government. Kaggia was a Mau hardliner and a member of the Kapenguria six which included Kenyatta himself. After independence, he pushed for recognition of the Mau fighters and the poor arguing that they needed proper compensation by the government, including being allocated land. This did not sit well with the Kenyatta government which resulted in frustrating him, terming his policies and demands communistic. By 1970, the government had successfully sidelined Kaggia and his supporters, which in effect meant the Home Guards having an upper hand in the silent contest against Mau veterans.

The last and most notable event was the assassination of Josiah Mwangi Kariuki, a Member of Parliament in Kenya and a former Mau detainee. J. M. Kariuki, as he was famously known, was very popular among the poor and he openly criticised Kenyatta government's policies which he claimed created "ten millionaires and a million beggars." His assassination in 1975 marked the last blow to the intricate contest between Mau fighters and sympathisers, and Home Guards and their supporters.

These three events inspired loud undertones of the Home Guards and Mau divide which marked the Kenyatta presidency. Among the Mau veterans, Kenyatta was considered a glorified betrayer. On the other hand, the Home Guards considered him a hero who had managed to strike a balance from a divisive national history to create a united country where efforts and hard work were rewarded while laziness was punished. In this context, Home Guards considered Mau fighters and their sympathisers to be lazybones who expected free things from the government while Mau fighters and their sympathisers considered Home Guards to be a lot made of gluttonous freeloaders who were reaping where they never sowed.

### **The Place of Home Guards During the First Phase of Moi's Presidency, 1978 – 1992s**

In the month of August 1978, the founding president of Kenya, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta breathed his last amid political fatigue and seemingly endless struggle for succession (Angelo, 2020). Power contestation had marked the period before the death of Kenyatta, and this continued even before the late president had been given a state burial. Throughout the 1970s, Kenyatta's death would be the overarching theme of discussion among his supporters, opponents and British officials who observed the evolution of the political scene keenly (Ibid). One of the groups contesting for power was made of former Home Guards who had weathered the political, social and economic storms to evolve into powerful political power brokers. Home Guards were created by the Kenya administration to defend members of their communities or to harass members of the Somali population and therefore keep the administrative boundaries in working order (Aguilar, 1998).

After 1978, Home Guards morphed into political players. The militancy in them was shed for political brokerage. Just before Jomo Kenyatta passed on, there were power plays pitting different camps. Home Guards cast their lot with the then Vice President Daniel Moi. This was probably because they were not comfortable with Jomo Kenyatta and his elite loyalists. This same group, made of the leading sons of Home Guards and loyalists, strongly

shielded Moi despite the sustained humiliation from Kiambu Mafia, a crony for elite loyalists from Kiambu County who feared losing power. It is hard to trace Home Guards to a single role after 1978. Their roles varied, cutting across economic, social and political fields.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND WAY FORWARD

The study examined the historical evolution of the Home Guards' unit in Kenya between 1945 to 1951, the place of Home Guards during the state of emergency between 1952 to 1957, after the state of emergency between 1958 to 1962 and during post-independence period upto 1992. It was noted that between 1945 and 1951, there was no immediate need for the existence of the Home Guards' unit. However, there existed the Tribal Police unit whose members were recruited from young men in their respective regions. The main role of the Tribal Police was to maintain law and order, collect taxes, and punish wrongdoers. There also existed the Kenya Police Reserve unit which had a majority of the settlers in its membership to offer protection to the settlers' community and support the colonial government in maintaining law and order. The Home Guards' unit originated from both.

After the outbreak of Mau insurgency in 1952, the colonial government saw the need to boost the Home Guards' unit transforming it into a very critical force in sustaining an offensive against the Mau fighters. Home Guards were under the command of the British colonial administrators and were seconded to work closely with the African colonial administration in the villages. To support achievement of success, the British colonial government proceeded with training of the members of the unit and provided them with arms for effective deployment. Between 1953 and 1955, the onslaught on Mau fighters was sustained by increasing the number of Home Guards in different parts of central Kenya. The British colonial government introduced villagisation, a concept conceived to restrict movement of the Mau fighters, whittle down any support they received and cut off recruitment of its membership from the rest of the community members. The Home Guards were placed at the centre of enforcing this concept. They oversaw movement of Agikuyu people into the villages, oversaw the building of trenches around the villages and also protected the villages from attacks by Mau fighters. This reign was marked with unmatched brutality which included forceful takeover of property belonging to Mau fighters and their sympathisers, forced marriage to wives of Mau fighters and forceful eviction of families of Mau fighters and land appropriation (Elkins, 2005).

The year 1956 marked the last military phase of the Mau insurgency. By this time, the Home Guards had been involved directly or indirectly in the killing of 13000 Mau fighters which was the official number of casualties, with the group suffering only 1800 loyalist deaths. The British colonial government was aware of the brutality with which the Home Guards operated. However, they chose to be blind to the atrocities and did not stop the unit's cruelty against their fellow Africans. This was largely because Home Guards were critical in their support to military offensive against the Mau fighters and their place in the British colonial government's objective to wipe out the Mau insurgency was simply irreplaceable (Elkins, 2005). Between 1956 and 1958, with the Mau insurgency on its deathbed, the British colonial government stood down Home Guards while some were recruited into the Tribal Police unit with a revised mandate of protecting African colonial administrators and keeping law and order in the villages.

The roles played by Home Guards between 1952 and 1962 was largely influenced by the immediate needs of that moment. This explains why they were easily deployed to carry out basically any activity that was important at that time and it was expected they would carry it out with a lot of ease. They offered security, became interrogators, trackers, fighters, supervisors, judges, witnesses, and any other role that needed to be filled up (Elkins, 2005).

The study has further examined the place of Home Guards during Kenyatta's presidency, 1963-1978, and the place of Home Guards during the first decade of Moi's presidency. It has concluded that during the first independence government led by Jomo Kenyatta and during Moi's presidency up to 1992, the Home Guards enjoyed a prominent place in the society. First, the Home Guards had used their connections with the elite loyalists who had formed the political ruling class and had managed to secure wealth, upstaging the Mau fighters. The amassed wealth which put them high on the ladder of social stratification. They had also managed to help their children access western education and this helped them to occupy the roles left behind by departing expatriates at the attainment of independence.

Moi's first phase of presidency lasted between 1978 and 1991 witnessed spirited wars pitting elite Home Guards from Kiambu district and Mau sympathisers drawn from other parts of central Kenya. The elite Home Guards led by Charles Njonjo who was the Attorney General at the time, managed to upstage their opponents led by Kihika Kimani, then a Member of Parliament and a Mau supporter and former detainee. This contestation shaped Moi's relationship with Home Guards and the Mau sympathisers. During Moi's presidency, the policy of deploying

Home Guards in the rural areas was continued. They successfully subdued cattle rustlers especially in North Rift areas like Turkana, Baringo, Marakwet and Samburu. However, the same Home Guards allocated themselves extraneous authority that placed them at crossroads with their neighbours.

The study has examined the place of Home Guards in Kenyan history upto 1992. The study laid bare the legacy and memory of the Home Guards in Kiambu County regarding narratives and perceptions of their role. It is important to note that the study's fundamental premise was that Home Guards were never a quiescent or accommodating part of the British colonial system, but rather led a double life of convenient conformity and subtle insubordination in their response to the armed struggle in central Kenya. During the state of emergency, they established themselves as a credible force, and after the country gained its independence, they effortlessly morphed into echelons of government, finally slithering their way into the levers of socio-economic and political institutions. Conclusion, the place of Home Guards in Kenyan history has not been well recognised, largely due to misinformation that existed during the state of emergency and after attainment of independence. For this reason, their contribution to the Mau Mau historiography is largely overlooked and remains peripheral.

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