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# Modus Operandi of Oppressing the “Savages”: The Kenyan British Colonial Experience

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# Modus Operandi of Oppressing the “Savages”: The Kenyan British Colonial Experience

## Abstract

Colonialism can be traced back to the dawn of the “age of discovery” that was pioneered by the Portuguese and the Spanish empires in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. It was not until the 1870s that “New Imperialism” characterized by the ideology of European expansionism envisioned acquiring new territories overseas. The Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 prepared the ground for the direct rule and occupation of Africa by European powers. In 1895, Kenya became part of the British East Africa Protectorate. From 1920, the British colonized Kenya until her independence in 1963. As in many other former British colonies around the world, most conspicuous and appalling was the modus operandi that was employed to colonize the targeted territories. Part one of this article discusses the tactics of subjugation used by the British to oppress, humiliate, subdue, conquer and colonize the Kenyan communities. These tactics included crown land ordinances; capitalist estate production; the establishment of African reserves and squatter systems; the formation of the “white” highlands; the imposition of taxes and forced labor; the imposition of the pass or *Kipande* System; missionary churches; the declaration of a state of emergency; military operations; villigilization; ethnic divide and rule; and flogging, torture, incarceration and execution. The findings offer a comparative template about the tactics used by the British in other colonies. Part two of this study addresses a new focus about the link between British colonialism and ethno-political conflicts in Kenya. This presents a new avenue for more focused interventionism in addressing such conflicts. Part three of this study introduces a new important inquiry about “what next?” for the victims and survivors of British colonialism in Kenya. The argument is that the study of British colonialism cannot be complete without interrogating transitional justice for the victims and survivors of colonial atrocities. The focus on transitional justice introduces a new debate about the need for collaborative action in facilitating restitution, reparations, healing and closure for victims and survivors of British colonial atrocities. Although resistance to colonial invasion was experienced in many parts of Kenya, this study concentrates on the Mount Kenya region where it was most intensive and dominant.

**Keywords:** *Peace and Conflict Studies; British Colonialism; Kenya, British, Colonial Styles, Ethnopolitical Violence, Transitional Justice*

## Author Bio(s)

Peter Karari is a lecturer in the department of Social Sciences at Karatina University in Kenya. He earned a PhD in Peace and Conflict Studies (PACS) from the Mauro Centre for Peace and Justice, University of Manitoba in Canada, a PACS Masters from Otto-von Guericke University in Germany, and a Bachelor in Social Work from the University of Nairobi in Kenya. He is the author of three books, four book chapters, and thirty five peer reviewed articles. He is a recipient of numerous academic scholarships including the University of Manitoba Graduate Fellowship.