

Joel Barkan and Kenya

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Abstract: Joel Barkan's interest in Kenya as a high school student inspired a life-time's commitment to the country and wider East African region, reflected in his three edited volumes comparing political, economic, and policy developments in Kenya and Tanzania, his work as USAID's Regional Democracy and Governance Advisor in the early 1990s, and his continuing engagement with the country's political development through his work at CSIS and his role as founder and chair of the Kenya Working Group, the Washington, D.C.-based lobbying group.

Résumé: L'intérêt de Joel Barkan au Kenya est venu au lycée et a inspiré un engagement à vie pour le pays et l'ensemble de la région d'Afrique de l'est. La passion de Barkan pour ce pays est visible dans ses trois volumes édités qui comparent les politiques, les économies et les développements politiques au Kenya et en Tanzanie. Barkan a aussi travaillé en tant qu'USAID démocratique et conseiller en gouvernance dans les années 1990 et a eu un engagement continu avec le développement politique du pays par le biais de son travail au CSIS et son rôle en tant que fondateur et président du groupe de travail du Kenya, le groupe de pression basée à Washington, D.C.

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I first met Joel Barkan at the SAIS conference on the political economy of Kenya in April 1986, organized by Michael Schatzberg. The last time we had a protracted academic discussion was at the SAIS Conference “Kenya at 50” in late September 2013, when Barkan participated in a session on the evolution of Kenyan studies and Kenya since independence. In the discussion we explored how some of the “founding fathers” of Kenyan studies in the United States and Britain—John Lonsdale of Cambridge, John Harbeson of CUNY, Frank Holmquist of Hampshire College, Susanne D. Mueller of Boston University, and Barkan himself—first became interested in the country in the late 1950s and early 1960s. So how did Barkan become interested in Kenya?¹

During the Eisenhower recession of 1958, Barkan, still in high school, was bussing tables at the Ohio State University Faculty Club while taking an introductory course in political science. His father suggested that he audit a course specifically on Africa being offered by David Apter. At the time, Barkan’s only knowledge about Kenya had come from a series of articles on Mau Mau by Robert Ruark in his local newspaper. But his interest was aroused by Apter, and during his final year of high school he wrote a paper about anthropological studies of the Kikuyu and the Maasai. As an undergraduate at Cornell he discovered that there were few courses on Africa, but he maintained his interest. Upon graduation, he applied to and was accepted by the Crossroads Africa Program, the forerunner of the Peace Corps, which had been running for two years, declaring that he would like to go to Kenya. President Kennedy met with his group of volunteers at the White House before their departure. Immediately upon arriving in Kenya, Barkan and the others were put in a bus and traveled on dirt roads to western Kenya, arriving in Kisumu as night fell. The group was met by Chief Hezron and taken to Kakamega, and that night Barkan enjoyed his first Tusker. He spent six weeks in Tiriki, an opposition KADU area, where he observed local society just as multiparty politics was taking off. He then traveled to Uganda and Mombasa and spent three days in Nairobi, including two hours with Jomo Kenyatta at his farm in Gatundu. Kenyatta, Barkan recalled, was “quite something”: he exuded charisma, with the fly whisk and cap, sandals, and turquoise ring on his finger, and he asked, referring to the radio denunciation by Governor Sir Patrick Renison, “Do I look like a leader to darkness and death?” During the 1961 election Renison had castigated Kenyatta as the mastermind behind Mau Mau, the Kikuyu guerrilla movement that led the struggle for independence in the 1950s.

Barkan decided that he wanted to do graduate work in African studies and wrote to Apter, who recommended, given his interest in Kenya, that he go to UCLA and study with James Coleman. But in his graduate work Barkan ended up concentrating on university students in Tanzania, Uganda, and Ghana and didn’t return to Kenya until 1974. The decade of the ’70s was a crucial period for the evolution of political science as a discipline as well as for the study of Kenya. In Kenya itself the intellectual consequences of an increasingly authoritarian state on the work of political scientists were

all too evident, although the situation was to become even worse under President Daniel Moi in the 1980s and 1990s.

Barkan saw the contraction of intellectual space and the decline of the University of Nairobi as one of the tragedies of Kenya in the 1970s, although he fully recognized that what was happening in Nairobi was also occurring at Makerere, Ibadann, and Legon, and even at Dar-es-Salaam, where he was a visiting professor in the early part of the decade. He believed that the decline was partly due to political repression but also caused by the tremendous population growth of the 1960s–1980s, which saw the rise of Kenya's population from only 6.5 million people in 1961 to over twenty million by the early 1980s, a growth that had the effect of overwhelming resources. In the early 1960s the University of Nairobi had only two- to three thousand students and was a high-quality, highly selective institution for the training of the new elite.² By the end of the 1960s radical academics or even merely potentially troublesome faculty members were already being forced out. Barkan's friend, John Okumu, with whom he published the first edition of *Politics and Public Policy in Kenya and Tanzania*, was effectively driven out of the university as early as 1965 for being too close to Tom Mboya and Robert Ouko, both able ministers but also Luo, and therefore seen as a threat to Kikuyu power. The social scientists in the university came under special pressure.

Beginning in the 1980s the university's resource base was cut. Population pressure, the introduction by President Moi of the eight-four-four education system—partly to redress ethnic inequalities, but with no increase in faculty or their pay—was the beginning of the end, leading to the erosion of the university in tandem with the erosion of the state. As early as the 1970s, academic salaries had fallen behind those in the private sector and the senior grades of the civil service, and many Kenyan academics were compelled to do more and more consulting in order to pay school fees and support their families. And as Barkan put it, the more consulting you do, the less scholarship you produce. Some, finally, were faced with the quandary of whether to stay and tough it out or whether to leave altogether, and many of the best scholars chose the latter. Shem Migot-Adholla, an expert on land issues, left for the World Bank; Peter Anyang'-Ny'ongo went to teach in Mexico City and then Addis Ababa; Michael Chege left for the Ford Foundation; E. S. Atieno-Odhiambo, the most able historian of his generation, left for Rice University. And while the university failed to successfully accommodate the huge influx of undergraduates it also faltered, Barkan believed, in failing to develop doctoral programs so that it could prepare the next generation of scholars. These were real constraints on Kenyan scholarship by the late 1970s and early 1980s. The University of Nairobi and Kenyatta University College, moreover, came under increasing political pressure. Students and members of the Law Faculty, as well as social scientists, were deeply affected by the struggle for democratic rights and freedom of speech (see Klopp & Orina 2014).

Barkan, of course, was a product of the behavioral revolution in political science, advanced by the Committee on Comparative Politics of the

Social Science Research Council in the early 1960s with its global study of postcolonial societies, not only in Africa but also in South and Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and the Caribbean. David Apter and James Coleman, Barkan's mentor at UCLA, were in the vanguard of those developing this new approach. In the 1960s American graduate students embarking on research in Africa were armed with a particular paradigm, based on the introduction of quantitative methods, which drove their work. Barkan himself was an early exponent of survey research and found the manipulation of data fascinating. Survey methodology, he suggested, was what modern political science was about in the 1960s, and by the mid-1970s he was conducting surveys of the Kenyan Parliament. Toward the middle of his career his work took a somewhat different direction, but this was an interest he would revive thirty years later, when he returned once again to survey-based research.

In general, Barkan's cohort of political scientists saw themselves as an intellectual vanguard representing the American positivist approach, fighting against the British historical tradition. Barkan had first encountered the British at Makerere, where Coleman, wearing his Rockefeller Foundation hat, appeared briefly as director of the Makerere Institute of Social Research, committed to pushing the American social science agenda and to driving British academics—who as historians were not considered serious social scientists—out of East Africa. During the mid-1960s the Rockefeller Foundation, followed by the Ford Foundation, spread their tentacles throughout the region, promoting this new behavioral social science. Coleman's move to the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Nairobi was part of what Barkan at the SAIS conference described as “an aid project in the social sciences.”³

Nevertheless, both the British historical tradition and American positivistic political science contributed significantly to the study of independent Kenya in the 1960s, and both were to be challenged in the 1970s by the rise of neo-Marxist scholarship and the dependency school. In retrospect, however, Kenyan politics did not really submit to the categories of analysis used either by the behavioralists or the Marxists, and new explanations were applied when political trajectories did not match expectations. Students in political science, who have adopted a point of view that might be termed “historical institutionalism”—including Barkan from the 1980s—have perhaps found a productive middle ground.

These intellectual developments went along with modernization theory, although Barkan did not think these intellectual fashions followed a linear process.⁴ This 1960s campaign, he acknowledged, amounted to a colonialism of the mind, and, of course, soon generated opposition with the rise of underdevelopment theory in the 1970s, exemplified by the work on Kenya of Colin Leys, Geoff Lamb, Mike Cowan, David Mukaru-Ng'ang'a, and other scholars, and culminating in the “Kenya debate” of the late 1970s over the development role of indigenous capitalism. In fact, Barkan rightly believed that Kenya served as a laboratory for the evolution of social

science—and continues to do so. In his last years he found the research of the newest generation of scholars on Kenya exciting, but he was also concerned by the fact that Kenya is the subject of virtually half of American political science doctoral theses on Africa being undertaken today. This overconcentration, he feared, was distorting the study of the continent and straining Kenyan scholars, whose assistance was frequently sought, and the country's research resources. Barkan rightly insisted that Kenyan studies should be more integrated into comparative studies of Africa and its institutions, and he referred frequently to the research undertaken by Afrobarometer as demonstrating this. Cross-national comparisons, like his own Ph.D. thesis on university students in Uganda, Tanzania, and Ghana, might be difficult to undertake, but the rewards more than merit the effort.

Barkan went back to Kenya in 1981 and then again in 1986, when the repressive political climate, highlighted at the time by the harassment of the American researchers Michael Schatzberg and Jennifer Widner and the far harsher fate that befell many Kenyan scholars, convinced him that research in political science was virtually impossible and that he did not wish to return again. The Moi regime had become far more repressive than Kenyatta's in the 1960s and 1970s, and as noted earlier, this was a difficult time for researchers in Kenya.

It is perhaps appropriate here to say something about the two—arguably three—books that Barkan edited in 1978, 1984, and 1994, comparing Kenya and Tanzania. I say “two, arguably three” because the first and second editions of *Politics and Public Policy in Kenya and Tanzania* differed significantly. The first edition was co-edited with his friend John Okumu, while the second was edited solely by Barkan. When the first study was initially conceived, in 1973–74, Barkan had been a visiting senior lecturer in political science at the University of Dar-es-Salaam, where Okumu had sought refuge from the hostile political winds blowing in Nairobi. Written in the mid-1970s, the first edition was already concerned with the failure of *ujamaa* socialism. Tanzania, however vibrant politically, was not doing well economically, but the authors were more optimistic about Jomo Kenyatta's Kenya, which stood in stark contrast to Nyerere's Tanzania. The banning of the Kenya People's Union in 1969 and the detention of its leaders, not to mention the on-going dissent among the country's Somali population in Northeastern Province, were matters of concern, but economically Kenya's rulers seemed to have been remarkably successful. The mid-1970s commodity price boom, when Kenya's coffee and tea smallholders, as well as plantation agriculture and large-scale farmers, did well, coupled with the growth of the tourist industry, suggested that the government's 1965 “Sessional Paper on the Application of African Socialism in Kenya,” which advocated investment of resources in high-yield sectors and regions, had trumped the Arusha Declaration. *Harambee*, with its mobilization (or extraction) by political leaders and elites of development resources from local communities, had apparently proved more successful than *ujamaa*.

By 1984 the situation in both countries had deteriorated dramatically. With the oil price hike of the late 1970s and the ensuing recession in North America and Western Europe, terms of trade had moved sharply against East Africa's commodity producers. In Kenya, the easy years of economic growth had ended: the opportunities provided by import substitution industrialization had been exhausted, European settler farms had been apportioned among both large-scale African commercial farmers and smallholders on cooperatives, and state investment and purchasing contracts, as well as anti-Asian legislation in the retail sector, had promoted indigenous business enterprises and a wholesale transfer of commercial activities outside the major towns from Asians to Africans. The commodity boom of the mid-1970s, which had generated dramatic growth (in marked contrast to the situation in Tanzania) and highlighted the Kenyatta regime's ties to the indigenous commercial farming sector, had also ended as Indian tea and Brazilian coffee production rebounded while European and North American demand stagnated. President Moi's attempt to direct resources toward his own Kalenjin-led ethnic coalition—which included the Maasai, Coast, and Abaluhya, among others—at the expense of Jomo Kenyatta's ethnic bailiwick of the Kikuyu, Embu, and Meru, entailed a diversion of resources from high-yield Central Province, the dynamo of Kenya's economic postindependence growth, to less developed regions. The shift was undertaken in already hostile economic circumstances and provoked growing political opposition from the country's commercial elite.

Consequently, the very different fates of Kenya and Tanzania, which had been recorded in 1978 in the first edition of *Politics and Public Policy in Kenya and Tanzania*, no longer applied by 1984. Both countries had encountered major economic setbacks. Barkan observed that “economic conditions in both countries were much better in 1978 when the essays for the first edition were written than they are today. Since that time, Kenya's economy has stagnated while Tanzania's has declined to the point of collapse” (1984:xi) The two countries, he pointed out, had experienced a 20 to 25 percent drop in their terms of trade, international oil prices had doubled, and per capita food production had stagnated in Kenya and fallen in Tanzania to levels of the late 1960s, requiring increasing imports.

Politically, as the volumes hinted but did not stress, Kenya's progress had always been more problematic than Tanzania's. The Mau Mau struggle in the 1950s had been as much a civil war among the Kikuyu, pitting the dispossessed against the emerging “yeoman” class of commercial farmers and traders, requiring the Kenyan leader to devote much of his attention after independence to healing the divisions within the Kikuyu community rather than to consolidating a sense of national unity. After his difficult experiences with the Kenya African Union and the fledgling trade union movement in 1946–52, Jomo Kenyatta had never felt comfortable with the Kenya African National Union (KANU), which had been founded in 1960 while he was still in detention. As a result, he opted to rule through the administrative bureaucracy bequeathed by the British, which stretched

from sublocation headmen through district officers and district commissioners, up to provincial commissioners and the permanent secretary in the Office of the President, and to Kenyatta himself. Meanwhile, the ruling party was starved of funds and became moribund, only brought to life immediately before elections. By contrast, Nyerere controlled the Tanganyika African Union and its predecessor, the Tanganyika African Association, from the first, standing down as prime minister a month after independence in order to tour the country and rejuvenate the party. Ideology mattered in Tanzania in a way that it never did in Kenya, and Nyerere and other political leaders opted to control the country through the local party apparatus rather than through a revamped colonial administration. The formation of the union with Zanzibar in 1964 merely entrenched the primacy of ideology, rather than ushering in a new era.

Both editions of *Politics and Public Policy in Kenya and Tanzania* stressed the different paths taken by the two countries in the mid-1960s but downplayed the political calculations that lurked at the heart of these decisions. Rather, Barkan stressed the difficulties faced by Tanzania as it sought to promote equality, a multifaceted ambition, while Kenyan leaders focused more narrowly upon macrolevel growth, which they hoped would trickle down to the masses. This single aim, the volumes suggested, provided the Kenyan government and administration with a simpler set of policy precepts than those guiding Tanzania's attempt to recast society, which overwhelmed the state apparatus.

The second edition explored these themes in greater depth, commissioning new chapters by Richard Stren on urban policy and David Gordon on the foreign relations dilemmas of independence and development. The most important new addition, however, was David Leonard's chapter on class formation and agricultural development. Leonard saw what he called the "petty bourgeoisie" as the engine of growth in both countries, as, indeed, he argued, they had been since the 1930s. The economic and political aspirations were now frustrated in both countries: in Kenya by the emerging political-business elite, and in Tanzania by the political-bureaucratic leadership. Leonard's analysis of the changing class structure in Tanzania aptly summarized the country's plight and highlighted the differences with Kenya: the *kulaks* (Leonard's term) and traders were commonly known as *wanyonyaji* (literally, suckers or exploiters, or those who employ labor), while party officials, civil servants, and parastatal managers were referred to as *watumishi* (literally, servants). Thus, the state bureaucracy was privileged at the expense of the new capitalist producers, who were known in Kenya as the *matajiri* (literally, the rich). This commercial farming elite was most developed in Kikuyuland, which had gone through profound social engineering with the Swynnerton Plan during the 1950s, justified by the reforms needed to defeat the Mau Mau insurgency and promote a conservative yeoman farming elite. With greater access to political patronage and the resources of state marketing boards and parastatals after independence, the members of this group had entrenched its power and had accepted Jomo Kenyatta as their spokesman and protector.

Leonard in his contribution suggested that President Moi, as a Kalenjin, was less captive to this *matajiri* constituency, which was most developed among the Kikuyu, than Kenyatta had been. This was perhaps too optimistic a reading of the Moi regime. Rather, the new Kalenjin president was politically more exposed as he lost Kikuyu support between 1978 and 1982, and perforce was compelled to extract resources more ruthlessly in order to consolidate the support of the *matajiri* in his own ethnic coalition, with its precarious access to capital and dependence on Asian commercial interests and intermediaries.

In 1994 Barkan edited a third comparative study, *Beyond Capitalism versus Socialism in Kenya and Tanzania*. In many respects this was a third edition of the earlier studies, with a number of new authors, including Michael Chege on multiparty politics, Benno J. Ndulu and Francis M. Mwegu on economic adjustment policies, and Michael Lofchie replacing David Leonard on agriculture. Barkan himself, Goran Hyden, and David Gordon brought their contributions up to date, while Richard Stren was joined by Mohamed Halfani and Joyce Malombe to deal with urban issues, and David Court on education was revised by Brian Cooksey and Ben Makau, who took the opportunity to discuss the *harambee* movement in Kenya and education for self-reliance in Tanzania. John Okumu and Frank Holmquist, who had analyzed party and party–state relations and “class structure, peasant participation, and rural self-help” (Holmquist alone), disappeared altogether, as did Claude Ake on ideology and objective conditions and Shem Migot-Adholla on rural development policy and equality. Thus the 1994 study devoted less attention to political parties as ideological movements, to *ujamaa* and Tanzania’s efforts to promote social equality, and to rural transformation in general.

The new study’s conclusions, moreover, were diametrically opposed to those of the first book. The authors, led by Barkan, suggested that Tanzania had seen the light and had largely accepted economic liberalization and the dismantling of the monopsony role of the state in agriculture, setting realistic exchange rates and cutting tariffs and customs controls. By contrast, Kenya had gone from bad in 1984, to far worse in 1994, despite President Moi’s reluctant acceptance of multiparty politics in 1991. The raiding of the national social security fund and the inflation of the money supply by 76 percent to finance KANU’s 1992 election campaign, the continuation of the repressive political climate which had prevailed since the attempted coup d’état in 1982, and the adoption of autarchic economic policies in opposition to the dictates of the IMF, the World Bank, and the main bilateral donors meant that economic conditions had deteriorated badly.

Barkan judged, nevertheless, that “the debate over capitalism versus socialism,” which had dominated political discourse not only in Africa but also in the entire developing world from the early 1960s to the late 1980s, “is all but dead,” swept away by economic failure and the end of the Cold War. The debates in Kenya and Tanzania, he suggested, reflected the hard

choices facing developing countries “as they seek to revive their systems through a tortuous process of economic and political reform.” They were, he observed, “faced by a common set of problems—a declining economy, rapid population growth, a bloated and at times repressive state, mounting corruption, and the loss of political authority on the part of their leaders.” The two countries, he argued, “now pursue a common set of solutions that transcend their previous differences in developmental perspective. Once noted for their divergence, the two countries are now examples of convergence as each has been forced to adopt similar reforms to overcome similar problems” (1994: xii)

But if Kenya and Tanzania were swallowing the medicine of structural adjustment, Tanzania in 1994 seemed a far more willing patient and appeared to have progressed farther along the path of recovery than Kenya had. Moi’s regime was more beleaguered than ever, determined to go its own way. If Tanzania had appeared to be at rock bottom in 1978 and Kenya to be doing reasonably well, sixteen years later their statuses were reversed; conditions in Tanzania seemed to be improving as the government dismantled the parastatal system, while conditions in Kenya were still deteriorating. Socialism might be dead (or, at least, dying), but the statist traditions inherited from the colonial state with its authoritarian political oversight remained in place. This was especially true in the northern country, where KANU, insecure in its popular support, lacked the confidence of Tanzania’s ruling Chama cha Mapinduzi (CCM) to dismantle economic and political controls. Barkan and his colleagues traced the impact of the advent of multiparty politics, and provided detailed accounts of the policy changes in macroeconomics, agriculture, urban development, education, and foreign policy.

The three volumes, covering the years from the early 1970s to the mid-1990s, provide a most useful guide to the political, public policy, and economic trajectories of the two countries, highlighting the difficulties and weaknesses in both the conception and implementation of Tanzanian *ujamaa* and Kenya’s statist capitalism. These could be traced to the two country’s different social and economic structures, the development and political legitimacy of the two nationalist movements and, thereafter, the legitimacy and ideological coherence of TANU/CCM and KANU, and perhaps as significantly to the different ethnic structures on which the two states’ political foundations rested. The volumes represent a significant contribution to the comparative study of African societies and more than justify Barkan’s repeated call that Kenya—or any other African country—should not be studied in isolation but on a comparative basis. It is to be regretted that Barkan never brought his knowledge about Uganda—of which he knew at least as much as he did about Kenya and Tanzania—and the insights it doubtless would have provided to the examination of its East African neighbors.

The end of the Cold War and the ensuing wave of democratization—Africa’s second independence—brought a transformation both in terms of the

United States' involvement with Africa and also in political and academic freedom and in Barkan's engagement with Kenya. Barkan played a pivotal role in both processes during his two years as USAID's second Regional Democracy and Governance Advisor in 1992–94. Before accepting the job, he had contacted a number of Kenyan scholars, who advised him to come to Nairobi as fast as he could. Barkan believed that as a facilitator of U.S. aid, he might really support the opening of political space. Michael Chege and Shem Migot-Adholla advised him that the University of Nairobi had more or less collapsed and that Kenya desperately needed an independent think tank in order to conduct policy-related research. The Institute of Development Studies (IDS) had filled this role under Kenyatta, undertaking policy-related as well as pure research, and the scholars associated with it felt that they had enjoyed real influence on government policies. Now it was vital to create a new nongovernmental institution that could play that role with the assistance of foreign funding.

Two weeks after he arrived in Nairobi as democracy and governance adviser, Ambassador Smith Hempstone and Deputy Chief of Mission Michael Southwick took Barkan out to lunch to discuss his thoughts about what activities USAID might support. Quite independently, they too had reached the conclusion that the United States should fund a think tank to facilitate structural adjustment and improved fiscal discipline. Thus the Institute of Policy Analysis and Research (IPAR), an independent organization, was born in 1994, along with KIPPRA—the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis, which commenced work in May 1997 and was funded as part of a deal with President Moi to create a government institution as well as an independent private policy research center. Both were initially financed by the Africa Capacity Building Foundation of the World Bank with USAID support as a catalyst. The Bank, through the Africa Capacity Building Foundation, went on to fund think tanks throughout Africa and also supported the African Economic Research Consortium, based in Nairobi, under the initial leadership of Benno Ndulu, a former lecturer at the University of Dar-es-Salaam and now governor of the Bank of Tanzania.⁵ Thus there was a confluence of interests among donors, who were seeking to improve macroeconomic policy, and the remnants of the country's academic community, who were in favor of intellectual rejuvenation and policy influence and saw think tanks as an alternative to the constricted and underresourced university setting.

Barkan, twenty years later, judged that the fortunes of Kenya's think tanks had gone up and down, and that they were not really a substitute for universities, primarily because they lacked a teaching mission, but he was convinced that one of the best things that had happened since Moi's retirement in 2002 had been the reestablishment of the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Nairobi, led by Karuti Kanyinga and other Kenyan political scientists and economists. These scholars had managed to put a research enterprise back on its feet in the universities and to begin to integrate a stronger comparative dimension into Kenyan studies. Barkan

supported the creation of think tanks not to enforce structural adjustment, but because he wished to see a more policy-driven politics, based on accurate data and analysis, which would produce broader reforms. He had a very strong faith in Kenya's young generation of intellectuals and business leaders and their capacity to transcend the country's ethnic politics of the past. KIPPRA, which he helped found, continues to be a thriving institution, with a number of young, reform-minded professionals. Barkan always worked closely with African political scientists, including Okumu, Mighota-Adholla, and Chege in the 1970s and 1980s, and then with Makau Mutua, Karuti Kanyinga, Mutuma Ruteere, and others over the last twenty-five years. Though Western scholars today embrace collaboration with Africa-based scholars, this was by no means standard practice for scholars of Barkan's generation. At USAID he was able to contribute directly to the revival of Kenya's academic institutions and to assist civil society in its struggle for democratic rights.

Barkan's interests in Kenya and, indeed, in Kenya's think tanks, went far beyond structural adjustment—of which he was no great fan—to include support for NGOs and the wider civil society, democratic change, and, after the return to multiparty politics, the creation of effective parliamentary committees and legislative checks on executive power. Barkan was focused on bringing about broad political structural changes, especially democratization, and improving the conduct of elections, and in his last decade he was also deeply interested in parliaments—a much neglected institution in African political science literature. These interests were to dominate the last twenty years of his career and are explored in Nic Cheeseman's contribution in this issue.

On his retirement from the University of Iowa, Barkan became an influential political commentator on Kenya in Washington, D.C., from his base at the Africa Program of the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Barkan was invariably optimistic, praising the 2010 Constitution for introducing checks and balances on the central executive, the devolution of responsibilities to the counties, and potentially the reduction of ethnic conflict at the provincial level. He was also confident that the newly created parliamentary committee system would develop and provide a real check on Kenya's "imperial presidency" and its executive.

Based on his experience at USAID, he believed that Washington-based lobby groups, like the Kenya Working Group that he helped to form with Sarah Margon of Human Rights Watch, had an important role to play, influencing the State Department and Congress on how it should deal with the Kenyatta-Ruto government, although he was perhaps slow to recognize that the Smith Hempstone era of the 1990s was finished: China and its authoritarian development model now offers an attractive alternative to the Kenya government and to many local business leaders. The Kenya Working Group and Barkan, with his friendship with Assistant Secretary Johnnie Carson, were in fact instrumental, along with others, in securing the removal of Ambassador Scott Gration, whom he judged to have been completely

ineffective in preparing the ground before Kenya's 2013 presidential election. He was also disturbed by the problems with electoral assistance to Kenya in the 2013 election, as outlined in his last article, "Technology Is Not Democracy." During his "retirement" in Washington he remained actively engaged both academically and through talks at various think tanks and through his contacts at the State Department, actively seeking to influence United States' policies toward Kenya and its neighbors. He was always well informed and up-to-date about recent developments in Kenya, remaining in close touch with his friend, former Prime Minister Raila Odinga, and absolutely convinced—quite rightly, I believe—that Nairobi over the last decade had become an extremely exciting place and that Kenya's business community, its hard-driving entrepreneurs, might just be the country's salvation, repairing the damage wrought by its fractious politicians.

Joel Barkan and I were friends. I last talked to him in January 2014, thirty-six hours before he left for Mexico City, and we had planned to meet on his return at the end of January: a date that we never kept. I miss him, Kenyan studies will miss him: for his drive, his enthusiasm, his commitment, and his zeal for the scientific study of Africa's politics.

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Notes

1. Much of the information on Barkan's awakening interest in Africa and most of the Barkan quotations on this topic are drawn from an interview with Joel Barkan, John Harbeson, Frank Holmquist, and Susanne D. Mueller conducted by the author

at the Johns Hopkins SAIS Conference “Kenya at 50,” in September 2013. The conversation is available at www.connectsaisafrica.org/conference/ “Kenya at 50” (day 2, session 3).

2. Though he noted regretfully that there had then been only a handful of indigenous professors.
3. The second edition of *Politics and Public Policy in Kenya and Tanzania* was dedicated to “J.S.C.,” i.e., J. S. Coleman.
4. Barkan, in fact, speculated that aspects of modernization and its concepts are now coming back into fashion and saw elements of this in Steven Radelet’s (2010) recent book.
5. Ndulu, of course, along with Francis W. Mwegu, had been recruited by Barkan to contribute a chapter titled “Economic Adjustment Policies” to *Beyond Capitalism versus Socialism in Kenya and Tanzania* (Ndulu & Mwegu 1994). The authors stressed the danger that multiparty politics might merely become “the politics of access to rents” unless rent-seeking was dismantled.