P. Kagwanja (University of Nairobi)
The Clash of Generations? Youth Identity, Ethnic Violence and the Politics of Moi Succession in Kenya, 1991-2002

Abstract
This paper examines the root of marginality and powerlessness of the youth in Kenyan politics as well as their effort to recapture and refashion political power during the democratic transition. Conceiving the youth stratum in political rather than biological terms, the paper traces the visible powerlessness of the youth genealogically to the imperatives of patrimonial politics of the Kenyatta (1963-78) and Moi (1978-2002) States where constitutional encumbrances, cooptation, emasculation and outlawing of their organizations and social movements checked their mobility up the echelons of power.   The Moi State's strategy of poking the embers of 'uncivil nationalism' through instigating ethnic violence and recruiting 'tribal' warrior bands to terrorize and disenfranchise its opponents and frustrate democracy ushered in a 'lumpen moment' in Kenyan politics marked by the proliferation a culture of youth violence 'from below' to counter the violence 'from above'. To stem the tide of popular pressure to yield political power to the younger generation during the crucial 2002 elections, the Moi regime skilfully manipulated the 'nationalist impulse,' ethnic and class sentiments by elevating the sons of revered nationalist heroes into the upper echelons of government and party machinery as part of grand strategy of perpetuating the power and patronage of the elders behind the curtain. Youth resistance to the patronage of the corrupt patrimonial elders and their 'aristocratic' and 'politically inexperienced' youth clients split the Kenyan youth along class and ethnic lines, leading to the crashing defeat of the *ancient regime* during the 2002 elections. This paper employs the Gramscian concept of *hegemony* to understand the dynamics of inter-and intra generational tensions and to problematize the very concept of youth within the broader canvas of democratic transition.