

The GLOCEPS

Webinar Series | Week 6 Report

Theme: Institutionalizing the Raila Odinga Legacy: Constitutionalism, Democratic Reform, and the Realization of African Union Agenda 2063

Overview and Analytical Framing

The Global Centre for Policy and Strategy (GLOCEPS) convened the sixth session of its ten-week webinar series on 29th April 2026 to interrogate the intersection between political reconciliation mechanisms and ideological leadership in shaping democratic trajectories in Kenya and Africa.

The session focused on two interlinked thematic areas:

- (i) Handshake politics as a mechanism for democratic consolidation and conflict resolution; and
- (ii) The ideological foundations of Raila Odinga's political career and the role of political parties as vehicles for institutionalizing his reformist vision.

The session was guided by three central analytical questions:

- Do handshake agreements consolidate democracy or entrench elite bargaining and weaken accountability?
- What constitutes Raila Odinga's political ideology, and how has it evolved across political cycles?
- How can personality-driven political practices be transformed into institutional frameworks aligned with the African Union Agenda 2063?

A **central conclusion** emerging from the session is that handshake politics represents a structural paradox: while it has historically prevented large-scale political violence and stabilized governance during crises, it simultaneously risks

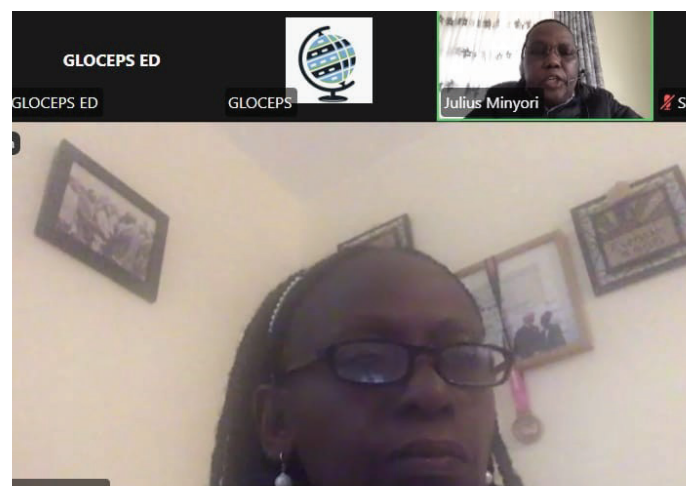
entrenching elite bargains, weakening opposition accountability, and sidelining citizen agency.

Similarly, while Raila Odinga's ideological orientation, often framed as social democracy, has shaped reform discourse, its institutionalization through political parties remains uneven and frequently subordinated to personality-driven mobilization.

Strategic Context and Opening Reflections

The session was opened by **Dr. Kenedy Asembo**, Executive Director of GLOCEPS, who situated Week 6 within the Governance and Ethics Pillar as a transition point from institutional analysis toward ideological and reconciliatory dimensions of leadership.

He emphasized the need to interrogate whether Odinga's legacy can be institutionalized beyond charismatic authority, or whether it remains structurally dependent on personality-driven politics.



Amb. Dr. Josephine Ojiambo, Webinar Chair, framed the discussion within **AU Agenda 2063**, particularly:

- **Aspiration 3:** Integrated and politically united Africa
- **Aspiration 4:** Peaceful and secure Africa

She identified Odinga's dual legacy as:

- A **pragmatic reconciler**, leveraging handshake diplomacy to stabilize governance
- An **ideological reformer**, advancing constitutionalism, devolution, and social justice

She emphasized that the tension between confrontation and compromise requires systematic analytical unpacking, particularly in the context of institutionalization.

The session was moderated by **Col (Rtd) Julius Minyori**, ensuring structured engagement across presentations, discussant interventions, and plenary dialogue.

Summary of Key Papers

Paper I:

Raila Amolo Odinga's Legacy in Kenya: Consolidating Democracy through Handshake

Author: Dr. Sylvia Wakene Muriuki, PhD.

The paper examined handshake politics across four administrations: Moi (1997), Kibaki (2008), Kenyatta (2018), and Ruto (2024), arguing that these interventions contributed to democratic consolidation by preventing violence and institutionalizing dialogue.

Key Contributions:

- Historical grounding of handshake politics in Kenya's elite-driven political settlements
- The 2008 Grand Coalition was a turning point, enabling the 2010 Constitution.

• The 2018 handshake was a reform-oriented but legally contested initiative (BBI)

• The 2024 rapprochement as a contemporary case raises questions of legitimacy and opposition co-optation.

The paper concludes that handshake politics has functioned as a crisis management mechanism, though its long-term democratic implications remain contested.

Paper II:

Contextualisation of Raila Odinga Ideology in the Kenyan Political Arena Using Political Parties

Author: Jack Otieno Ayoo

The paper contextualized Raila Odinga's ideology, identified as social democracy, and examined how political parties served as vehicles for articulating and advancing this ideology.

Key Contributions:

- Ideological formation shaped by post-independence inequality and state repression
- The 1982 coup and subsequent detention were a defining moment
- Political party evolution (FORD, NDP, LDP, ODM) as ideological platforms
- Coalition-building (NARC, CORD, NASA) as instruments of multi-ethnic mobilization
- Reform-oriented messaging centered on inequality, governance, and inclusion

The paper argues that while ideological consistency is evident, institutional consolidation through parties remains weak and uneven.

Discussants' Reflections and Critical Engagement

Paper I: Handshake Politics

Discussants: Dr. Nicodemus Minde, PhD. & Amb. Erastus Mwencha





Dr. Nicodemus Minde, PhD.

Dr. Minde emphasized the need for a decisive shift from descriptive narration to theoretical analysis.

Key critiques:

- Under-theorisation:** The paper references elite bargaining but does not develop it; it should engage competing frameworks, including elite pact theory, competitive authoritarianism, consociational democracy, and spoiler theory
- Analytical bias:** The portrayal of handshakes as inherently positive reflects normative bias and lacks evidentiary support
- Conceptual ambiguity:** The paper fails to distinguish between handshakes, power-sharing agreements, and elite co-optation
- Contradictions unaddressed:** The dual role of Odinga as both democrat and elite bargainer is not analytically resolved
- Citizen perspective missing:** The absence of public perception raises questions about whether handshakes constitute an "economy of elite exchange."
- Methodological weakness:** Lack of a clear research hook and contribution to existing literature

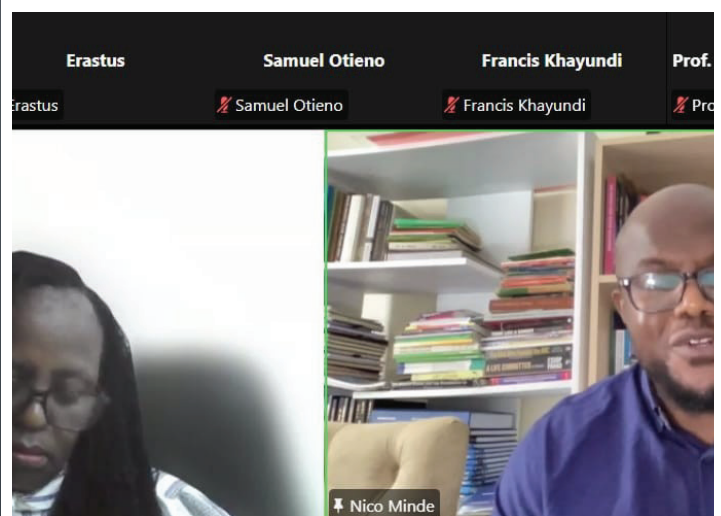
Amb. Erastus Mwencha

Amb. Mwencha emphasized the broader structural implications:

- Reputational concern:** Kenya risks being defined by elite bargaining rather than institutional conflict resolution
- Handshake paradox:** These agreements prevent violence but entrench elitism
- Normalization question:** Has handshake politics become the default mechanism due to weak institutions?
- Panacea vs problem:** The paper must take a

definitive position rather than presenting dual conclusions

- Comparative gap:** Limited analysis of Odinga's regional mediation role (South Sudan, DRC, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe)
- Critical omission:** The 2024 handshake is insufficiently interrogated, particularly in light of state violence during Gen Z protests



Paper II: Ideology and Political Parties

Discussants: Dr. Alfred Ong'era, PhD & Dr. Kawiwe Wambua, PhD.
Dr. Alfred Ong'era, PhD.

Dr. Ong'era called for deeper conceptual and theoretical clarity:

- Ideological definition gap:** Social democracy is not defined within the Kenyan context
- Lack of theoretical extraction:** The paper does not articulate what Odinga contributes to political science
- Descriptive bias:** Events are narrated without a causal explanation
- Phases of legacy unclear:** No structured periodization of ideological evolution



- **Missing institutional linkages:** Limited attention to devolution, referendums, and party governance

- **Symbolic analysis absent:** Political identity markers (e.g., nicknames) are not decoded

Dr. Kaviwe Wambua, PhD.

Dr. Wambua emphasized structural and methodological gaps:

- **Unclear research intent:** Ambiguity between biography, policy analysis, and academic inquiry

- **Unsubstantiated claims:** Assertions about motivations lack evidence

- **Weak methodological grounding:** No clarity on data sources, sampling, or analytical framework

- **Logical gaps:** Causal links between actions and institutional outcomes are not demonstrated

- **Conceptual gaps:** Democracy and development frameworks are not defined

- **Historical depth missing:** Limited engagement with FORD politics, party splits, and coalition dynamics

Plenary Reflections

Key Interventions

Amb. Dr. Josephine Ojiambo, PhD.

- She underscored the need to institutionalize civic education based on Odinga's mass mobilization strategies.

- She called for the integration of civil society actors (CSOs/NGOs) into legacy frameworks.

Prof. Shem Wandiga, PhD.

- He questioned the democratic legitimacy of the 2024 handshake

- He also raised concerns about generational exclusion (Gen Z protests)

The plenary proposed practical legacy tools:

- Raila Odinga Handbook

- Annual lecture series

- Awards framework

They called for the demystification of handshake politics as a broader elite mechanism.

Cross-Cutting Issues

- **Charisma vs institutions:** Durable legacy lies in constitutional and institutional reforms

- **Elite capture risk:** Handshakes may entrench patronage networks

- **Generational reinterpretation:** Youth are reframing Odinga's legacy through protest politics

- **Contextualization need:** Legacy must be situated within Kenya's political history (detentions, assassinations, reform struggles)

Key Areas for Improvement

Paper I

- Develop a robust theoretical framework

- Address the handshake paradox explicitly

- Incorporate citizen perspectives

- Distinguish clearly between political arrangements

- Expand comparative and empirical analysis

- Critically evaluate the 2024 handshake

Paper II

- Define social democracy in context

- Strengthen theoretical and methodological rigor

- Clarify research intent

- Address internal party democracy and institutional sustainability

- Integrate key reform processes (devolution, BBI, referendums)

- Eliminate unsubstantiated claims





Cross-Cutting Analytical Insights

- **Handshake paradox:** Stability vs accountability trade-off
- **Ideology–practice gap:** Reform ideals constrained by political pragmatism
- **Institutional fragility:** Informal mechanisms dominate weak formal systems
- **Party institutionalization failure:** Personality-driven structures persist
- **Generational shift:** Youth-driven political redefinition is underway

Conclusion and Way Forward

The Week 6 session marked a shift toward critical, theory-driven interrogation of political legacy.

Two defining conclusions emerged:

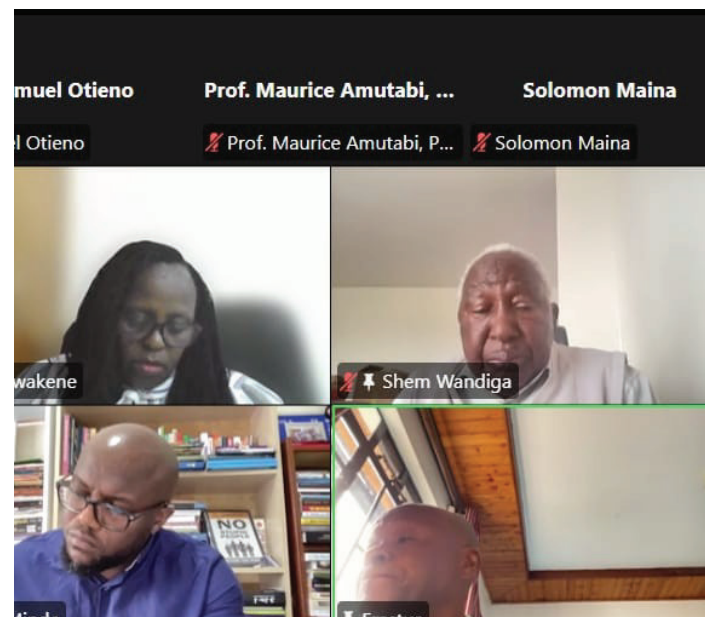
- Handshake politics is a double-edged instrument, simultaneously stabilizing and corrosive
 - Ideological legacy remains under-institutionalized, with weak translation into durable political structures
- In closing remarks, **Brig (Rtd) Foustine Sirera** emphasized:
- The need for methodological rigor and analytical neutrality
 - The importance of separating institutional

achievements from personality-driven politics

- The urgency of developing structured legacy frameworks

Recommended Next Steps

- Development of a Raila Odinga Governance Handbook
- Institutionalization of annual lectures and awards systems
- Integration into civic education frameworks
- Strengthening linkages to AU Agenda 2063 governance aspirations



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