

**ELECTION VIOLENCE IN KENYA**

By

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## ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the role of ethnic violence in Kenya's electoral process from 1992-2013 with a specific reference to factors that shape and influence the election outcome. These include ethnic divisions, institutions, social cleavages and media. There is nothing that Kenyan citizens fear as the outbreak of a fresh ethnic conflict like those that rocked the country during the 1992 post-election violence. Kenyans believe that the wave of inter-ethnic conflicts which took place at most of the provinces were the worst since its independence in 1963. As a result Kenyans now believe that violence may arise during any future elections, hence making this an important topic for discussion. Ethnic conflicts during elections in Kenya have continued to generate confusion, panic and skepticism between the government and the opposition parties. In the light of the above scenario, this study attempts to find, analyze and verify the root causes of the ethnic conflicts in order to understand and propose solutions that could help the Kenyan government and society in their search for a better future through democratic consolidation. This study also attempts to discuss other crucial themes related to ethnic conflicts and their implications to the stability and development of Kenya. Using case studies of five election years 1992, 1997, 2002, 2007, and 2013 the study finds support for the hypothesis that ethnic divisions influence election violence.

Key terms: Ethnicity, Elections violence, Institutionalism and social cleavages.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

*“I can see the beginnings of an ethnic conflict, I really can. Every day, you've got more deaths...they say Kibaki supporters (president) were attacked or Odinga supporters (opposition) were attacked, that's just code for Kikuyu and Luo.”*

*Quote from local observer and political activist Mwalimu Mati, Time February 1, 2008.*

From December 2007 to February 2008 an estimated 1200 people were killed as a result of post-election violence and over 300,000 people were displaced due to property damage and fear of returning home. The worst of the reported incidents was that 200 members of President Kibaki's ethnic group (the Kikuyu) took shelter in a church and then the opposition extremist burned the church killing 35 people. The violence was the result of a contested election between the ruling coalition led by Kibaki and opposition parties led by Odinga. Root of the violence is the ethnically divided political parties and incumbent leaders attempting to manipulate elections to stay in power for themselves and their ethnic group.

Many of Kenya's political parties began as anti-colonial organizations and later become post-colonial political parties. Before the British colonized Kenya in 1920, the 42 ethnic groups in Kenya lived together with no political parties or violence (Manby, 1993). After suffering from economic and political exclusion under British rule, Kenyans formed political parties that shared a common goal – to end colonialism. The Kenya African National Union (KANU) and the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) were formed in 1960. Both parties fought for independence and in 1963 Kenya became an independent state. KADU merged with KANU in 1964 making KANU the only political party in Kenya under President Jomo Kenyatta. He was an authoritarian leader who favored ethnicity and nepotism. He abused power by amending the constitution. Members of his ethnic group (Kikuyu) especially his relatives became wealthy during his time and got most of the land. They still remain an elite group today with his son

Uhuru Kenyatta as the current president of Kenya. He remained in power until his death in 1978. President Moi then took over office and stayed in power until 2002. During his tenure Kenya transitioned from a one party state to a multiparty state in 1992.

During the introduction of multiparty opposition parties were formed along ethnic lines. The history of opposition in Kenya since 1992 is one of division, infighting, and a consistent inability to cooperate to achieve common goals (Apollos, 2001). The following parties were formed based on ethnic affiliation: The Forum for the Restoration of Democracy in Kenya (FORD – K) was formed mainly by the Luo tribe. While the Luhya formed the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy – Asili (FORD – A), and the Kikuyu formed the Democratic Party (DP) (Steeves, 2006).

In 1997, two additional opposition parties were formed in addition to those created in 1992. The National Democratic Party (NDP) and the Social Democratic Party (SDP) were formed by the Luo and Kamba respectively. This created a larger number of exclusively ethnic based parties and party leaders who used ethnic division to gain control of the elections and the presidency. Both the elections in 1992 and 1997 were violent with all the opposition parties competing to overthrow KANU and President Moi from power. It was not until 2002 that the opposition decided to form its first coalition party, the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) that they managed to win the elections. These elections saw different ethnic groups come together as one with a common goal of overthrowing President Moi who had been in office for 24years.

During the 2007 elections, several ethnic groups wanted to be in control of power hence the emergence of several coalitions and single parties. The competition between these ethnic groups resulted in severe violence. The (Kenya Human rights commission report 94, 2008) identifies three “distinct but sometimes concurrent patterns of violence – spontaneous, organized

and retaliatory.” It states that the first phase began immediately after the announcement of the contested election results, when opposition supporters took to the streets in protest, especially in Kisumu and the Nairobi slum areas; the second wave consisted of organized attacks in the Rift Valley which appeared to have targeted non-Kalenjin communities and those perceived as opponents of the opposition Orange Democratic Party (ODM), including the Kikuyu, Kisii and Luyha communities. In retaliation, gangs of Kikuyu youths subsequently attacked non-Kikuyu groups in Naivasha, Nakuru and Mathare. In all, more than 1,200 Kenyans were reported killed, thousands more injured, over 300,000 people displaced and around 42,000 houses and many businesses were looted or destroyed (UN report 6-28 February 2008). A significant number of cases of sexual violence were also reported.

The electoral process in Kenya has frequently been threatened by ethnic pluralism, unequitable redistribution of national wealth and the struggle for political power. In fact, holding the office of president provides many benefits for the individual and the groups close to the president. However, the losers of the election are left out of the decision making process. Przeworski (1991) suggests that a free and fair election guarantees an uncertain result. That is, no party will know the outcome of the election until after the results have been counted. If all parties trust the election process to be fair, then the opposition believes they will have a chance to win in the next election. However, if the opposition believes the election is not a fair process, then they may not accept the election outcomes.

Another aspect of democracy is that the losing parties have a say in government between elections (Przeworski 1991). Therefore, even if the opposition loses the election, they believe they have a chance at winning the next election and have some voice in the current government. However, if the losers of the election are not treated fairly and given some voice in government,

then there may be greater post-election violence. The situation is further worsened by the centralized political power in the executive that controls the distribution of resources. Centralized power is the distinctive nature of the colonial legacy rooted in exploitation, oppression and violence. Such violence has social and economic consequences that undermine the development of the country. Several people have been left homeless, injured or dead. Economically the country suffers tremendously from shortages of food, and resources. The immediate and real consequence of the election in Kenya is felt most at personal and family level. There is loss of security in the conflict-prone areas as the civilians take the law into their own hands, targeting perceived enemies. As a result of insecurity, there is indiscriminate loss of human life.

The puzzle in this study is whether or not the ethnic political parties are part of a deep historical division or created by political entrepreneurs (those who use ethnicity to mobilize parties in order to obtain political power). In short, these leaders use ethnicity for their own political gain.

The objective of this research was to study and analyze the causes of the election violence. In this regard the research made few assumptions which guided the researcher in answering the question: Do ethnic traditional ethnic divisions influence election violence in Kenya?

To answer this question, the study distinguishes between static (unchanging) ethnic parties and coalitions versus dynamic and changing party membership. This includes the nature of opposition parties and coalitions. Static parties are strictly ethnic based groups with narrow party goals aimed at the presidency and political power for their own group interests. These are static because they are tied to traditional ethnic groups and divisions. Static parties are less

tolerant of other ethnic parties and coalitions whether they are the incumbents or opposition. However, more dynamic broad based parties maybe more tolerant and acceptant of diverse groups within their own larger coalition. These are dynamic because they will have a mix of ethnic groups within the parties rather than strictly traditional/historical ties. This may also generate greater tolerance for other parties and coalitions whether they are the incumbent opposition. It is hoped that the research findings will provide data that can be used in the promotion of a better future founded on democratic ideals of international law and the traditional values of the Kenyan ethnic divisions.

This will be done by identifying and analyzing the problem of historical conflicts which should be resolved in order to foster society's aspiration of peaceful elections. The implication is that if election violence is due to static traditional ethnic divisions, then it will be very difficult to change society and these deep historical divisions.

The significance of this study lies in the opportunity it offers the researcher to contribute to knowledge on Kenya's election violence. Secondly, this study represents a more current and comprehensive body of research on how historical ethnic divisions still contribute to election violence in Kenya. Unlike past studies which focused on historical land divisions and pluralism, this study will invariably fill the vacuum in literature on ethnic divided political institutions as influencing election violence in Kenya (Posner, 2005)

The remainder of this paper proceeds as follows: Chapter 2 literature review expounds on the existing theories regarding election violence in Kenya. The chapter discusses some scholarly works on contextual concepts, historical ethnic divisions in Kenya and the origin of political parties. Then I describe the literature on theoretical impact on election violence focusing on institutionalism. In Chapter 3, I present the research design of this thesis and explain the method

of researching the issue by specifying dependent variable (election violence) and independent variables such as (ethnicity), (political parties). The data used and analysis procedure are also described. Chapter 4 describes the data of each election year, and thereafter analyzes theoretical assumption. Also, several cases are examined to strengthen my argument. Thesis concludes with conclusion and discussion in Chapter 5.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### DEFINITION OF TERMS

- ETHNICITY – Mungai (1995) defines ethnicity as “a consciousness among people with shared cultural and linguistic roots that get utilized for political affiliation and mobilization to compete with other groups for scarce resources”.
- Institutions – these are political parties in Kenya.
- Political entrepreneurs – these are politicians that use ethnicity with an intent to benefit from the election.
- Social cleavages – the divisions of individuals along social and economic status (Elisher, 2008).

The literature provides three general explanations for the election violence. The first is traditional ethnic divisions that have historically erupted into violent conflict over resources and political authority. Second are social cleavages, such as unemployment, poverty (hunger) and need for social services, that drives conflict between political parties as well as government and opposition. The third is the institutional explanation that includes the election process, the party system and coalitions as well as the authority of the executive branch.

### *Ethnicity*

Indigenous ethnic groups in Kenya have lived together within provinces and districts that were created by the colonial government. The problems associated with Kenya’s electoral violence are not only rooted in post-colonial theory but also in ethnic and ideological contradictions. Instead of transforming the political structures established by the British administration the post-independent Kenyan political entrepreneurs have rather substituted themselves as an elite class and used power to undermine the interests of Kenyan citizens.

My contribution is connecting party system with political entrepreneurs. Few scholars show how the party system connects with ethnicity. My study suggests that political entrepreneurs use the party system to take advantage of ethnic divisions. Coalitions reduce political entrepreneur opportunity to use ethnicity especially when the same ethnic groups are in different coalitions (share coalitions).

Kenya has witnessed several incidences of election violence characterized by ethnic conflicts, political instability, mass atrocities and loss of property. Kenya's challenges towards durable democratization portray a continental trend in Africa though with different degrees of variation. Examples are Rwanda and Nigeria where ethnic divisions have led to genocide and mass killings.

Since the restoration of multiparty system in Kenya in the early 1990s, three of Kenya's five presidential elections 1992, 1997, and 2007 have been accompanied by severe violence in the form of ethnic clashes. However, the elections of 2002 and 2013 were relatively peaceful. This study attempts to explain this variation. The 2007 post-election violence in Kenya was unprecedented but it was bound to happen as Ndungu states, "The violence was not merely an electoral dispute over the results but an issue that has been waiting to explode over the years" (Ndungu, 2008).

It is important to understand the meaning of an ethnic group. Jenkins defines an ethnic group as "a group of people whose members believe that they are from a common descent" (Jenkins 1997:13). In Kenya members of different ethnic groups with similar dialects belong to one ethnic group. Some examples include Kalenjin, Kikuyu, and Luo. For purposes of my research I will focus on five of the major groups: Kalenjin, Kikuyu, Kamba, Luyha and Luo. These groups are mainly found in the Rift valley, Central, Eastern, Western and Nyanza

provinces respectively. Over the years these ethnic groups have compete to rule Kenya. This competition has often resulted in inter-ethnic conflicts that had major impacts on the election violence in Kenya.

The 2007 post-election violence has become the epitome of ethnic disharmony in the Kenyan communities living in the Rift valley province. Lynch states that, Kibaki, defended his seat on a Party of National Unity (PNU) ticket against Odinga of the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), Musyoka of ODM-Kenya, and six other presidential hopefuls. Within a week, widespread claims of vote rigging and associated scenes of violence had grabbed the world's attention. By the end of February 2008, post-election violence had left at least 1,000 Kenyans dead and over 350,000 displaced (Lynch, 2006).

Lynch argues that violence in Kenya has become normalized as a result of this, elections have been characterized by a history of impunity, lack of citizens' faith in institutions, and the association of ethnic groups with political parties. The polarization of ethnic groups in Kenya has been linked by several scholars to the colonial rulers who contributed to the formation of incompatible ethnic groups, political parties and a badly fitted multi-ethnic democratic nation (Nyakuru 1997: Holmquest, 2009).

(Lochery, (2008), and Holmquist, (2009) suggest that "the causes of the violence are to be found in deeper-rooted historical and political conflicts." They argue that the origins of the violence are not only political and economic but competition between ethnic groups. Hence, the maintenance of ethnic nationalism is an essential precondition for a durable democracy, state survival and sustainable development in Kenya.

Ethnicity has emerged as the single most important factor in political competition and in the formation of political parties (Ajulu, 2002). However, few scholars connect ethnicity with the party system (institutions). Since independence, Kenyans have learned to live with political violence. Indeed, it has become a normalized part of politics, so much so that acts of political violence are observed and reported without any expectation that prosecutions or other consequences might arise. Rok Ajulu, points out that elections in Kenya have been driven by competitive politics and politicized ethnicity.

Kenya is a country where ethnicity has become politicized. Whenever there are elections institutions are pressurized by political entrepreneurs who want to exploit ethnic groups and their perceived inequalities to mobilize for political party support. Leaders tend to support their ethnic groups and this encourages ethnic identity politics (Jonjo, 2002). These kind of ethnic political strategies have often led to escalation of violence amongst ethnic groups in Kenya.

### *Social Cleavages*

Kenyan's society is characterized by economic and political inequality. The gap between the rich and the poor is very wide. This difference has led to economic and social grievances among Kenyans who feel that they have been marginalized economically. These groups use violence as an excuse to vandalize and loot from the rich. On the other hand, the elites who feel excluded or threatened begin to invoke ethnic ideology in the hope of establishing a reliable base of support to fight and to destroy the unprivileged members of their communities.

Class divisions in Kenya are based on economic power within the ethnic groups. Ever since independence the elected presidents have allocated land to members of their respective ethnic groups and this has always resulted in uneven distribution of land. The Kalenjin and the Kikuyu in Kenya have been known to own most of the fertile land in Kenya since the former

presidents come from these ethnic groups (McWilliam, 2012). According to Kagwanja, in his analysis locates the origin of the crisis in “the background of population growth and extensive poverty, ethnic disputes relating to land especially between the Kalenjin and the Kikuyu in the Rift Valley” (Kagwanja, 2009). Those communities that have not got a chance to rule feel left out and will always fight for their chance to have a president from their ethnic group. Landau argues that a struggle over land has always been the characteristic of Kenyan political life (Landau et al 2009). The land dispute was reflected in the 1992 and the 1997 violence, and Cheeseman states that the 2007 election violence had a huge impact on Kenya’s economy, hence increasing the social division among citizens. Those who felt marginalized such as the poor changed their voting habits (Cheeseman, 2008).

### ***Political Institutions in Kenya***

Several characteristics of Kenyan political institutions contribute to problems in running fair elections. The first is inherited colonial institutions that tend to be authoritarian and centralized. Second is that some of the institutions have been created at moments of crisis and have been shaped by political leaders for expediency. These are more informal agreements than legally grounded institutions. For example, previous presidents have worked out informal post-election compromises and deals to divide state resources with select political parties to ensure support rather than institutionalize representation and division of resources. In the 1990s the incumbent president, Daniel arap Moi, was able to use a combination of intimidation, violence, and ethnic divisions among the opposition to win both the presidency and a parliamentary majority on a plurality of votes, mainly from his own group and several other small ethnic groups (Horowitz, 1993).

Institutions provide the opportunity for political entrepreneurs to use ethnicity as a form of institutional power and a way to gain political office and control other resources. Institutions thus derive their political potency from their constitutive role both in defining the very identity of agents as socially relevant persons and embedding them in a structure of constraints and opportunities (Omolo, 2002; Mozaffer, 1995).

The political leaders in Kenya also play a major role in perpetuating the violence before and after elections. Cheeseman believes that the potential for conflict in Kenya would have been significantly diffused if the government had not deliberately manipulated the election process and constitutional reform that would have decentralization power and reduce the authority of the executive. Political party leaders have been known to favor their groups whenever they come together to form coalitions in order to strengthen their voice (Lynch, 2007). During campaigns political leaders mainly focus on their ethnic groups to vote for them. This makes the election process a regional process as opposed to a national process.

Few studies on recent political change in Africa have focused on the discourse over democratic institutions, especially with regard to balancing competing ethnic interests. In this failed transitions where ethnicity is evidently a factor in mobilizing for political change or for anticipated electoral politics, a more robust explanation for the conflict can be found by applying the theoretical framework of ethnic cleavages. The election violence in Kenya is a clear indication of how incumbent leaders in Kenya have failed to establish free and fair elections for all Kenyans irrespective of their ethnic affiliation. Holmquist describes how the political institutions such as the election institutions and policy making process are centralized and serve the incumbent leadership and party (Holmquist, 2009). Some of the institutions have been shaped by political expediency and others have been designed not as a social compact between

rulers but as agreements between members of the ruling elite to manage access to power amongst themselves. This winner-take-all election model creates tension among opposition groups and may also contribute to the pre and post-election violence.

We can't understand the Kenyan political system without understanding its evolution from single party to multiparty coalitions. Coalitions as defined by Altman are a set of parliamentary political parties that agree to pursue a common goal and pull their resources together in pursuit of this goal (Altman, 2000). The processes of forming and sustaining ethnic coalitions has dominated Kenyan politics throughout the post-colonial period. The Kenyan African National Union (KANU) and the Kenyan African Democratic union (KADU) were, from their formation in 1960, fragile coalitions of ethnic communities, brought together initially by two conflicting approaches to developing an independent Kenyan state (Anderson, 2005). However, when Daniel arap Moi took power in 1978 the country returned to a single party political system. With the return of multi-party politics in the early 1990s, and the heightened competition and increased benefits that this change brought, the processes of forming and sustaining a winning coalition became even more central to national politics in Kenya. The parties that made up these coalitions were to a large extent ethnic parties, however while one ethnic group might be dominant in a coalition, several ethnic groups were typically represented. Each ethnic grouping has the potential to break down, reform, or ally with new partners (Lynch, 2006).

The formation of coalitions regardless of ethnic composition before or after elections is driven by a perceived need to either win an election or to ensure a working majority in parliament. The instability of coalition governments, including Kenya, has occurred in situations where the coalition parties are not close to one another ideologically and therefore find themselves disagreeing over the implementation of policies and goals. In 2002 the multiparty

formed a coalition to overthrow President Moi who had been in power for 24 years (Oyugi, 2002). Oyugi elaborates the key motivating factor in coalition formation as being based on a need to control power and to have an access to the benefits associated with power holding (2002). Mozaffar (2003) says the multiethnic pattern of ethno political cleavages exerts pressure toward the formation of multiethnic electoral coalitions that, in turn, engender party systems without excessive fragmentation. Such party systems facilitate the formation of multiethnic governing coalitions (Mozaffar, 2003)

In 2002, Kenyans seemed to be tired of the previous election violence and therefore decided to form the Rainbow coalition which was made up of the Kikuyus, Kalenjin, Luo, Luhya and Kamba. This unity resulted in a peaceful election in 2002. Horowitz's constructive perspective of ethnicity has been used to describe the political party system in Kenya. He states that "Kenyan political parties have increasingly incorporated diverse communities, and have consistently failed to bridge the country's dominant ethnic cleavages (Elischer, 2008). However, in 2007 the announcement of the election results sparked major disagreements between the Luo, the Kikuyus and Kalenjin over the election results. The Luo and the Kalenjin believe that Odinga had won the presidency but the electoral commission announce that it was President Kibaki who had won. This led to an unprecedented violence in Kenya. There was an estimated 1,000 deaths and over 600,000 Internally Displaced Persons during this election. This was by far the worst election violence in the history of Kenya. It almost seemed like a genocide whereby ethnic groups were killing each other mercilessly (Lynch, 2007:542).

The literature seems to focus on the election results as a major cause of the violence in the aftermath of the Kenya Presidential elections in 2007. However, there seems to be some issues such as ethnic divisions, party compositions, media, and election process that may have

contributed to the cause of the violence. As Ndungu states, election violence in Kenya was not merely an electoral dispute over the results but an issue that was bound to happen (Ndungu, 2008).

Poorly managed elections and inequality amongst Kenyan citizens could have contributed to the violence. Violence in Kenya has historically been caused by socio-political and economic structures. Social relations between the major ethnic groups such as the Kalenjin, the Kikuyus and Luo have been rough and has been accompanied by hatred since pre-colonial days. The need for each ethnic group to control land and to have political power has often resulted in conflicts. Indeed, according to several scholars, ethnicity continues to be a major force influencing the behavior of politicians who politicize ethnicity as a principle means of winning elections (Mapeu, 2007; Oyugi, 1997).

The effect of ethnicity in the electoral process in Kenya goes way back to the 1992 elections (Oyugi, 1997). This theory seems to be the most prevalent among scholars in an attempt to understand the cause of the election violence in Kenya. The transition of Kenya's political party system from a one party state to a political party system was not as smooth as expected. It was rekindled with rivalry among ethnic groups who wanted to kick out President Arap Moi and his Kalenjin community from the government. During this time Kenya's political parties were mainly dependent on ethnic compositions and their concentration in provincial areas.

During the election violence, groups seeking power abused women and children and perpetrated widespread violations of human rights. This was a period when the rule of law and human rights were seen as alien to the citizens as many Kenyans decided to trample on the fundamental human rights of fellow Kenyans with impunity (Obonyo, 2008). It has been argued that election violence in Kenya is a struggle for the control of the state (Landau et al, 2009).

Control of the state is core to political competition because it means access to resources, and patronage through which ethnic elites can remain in power" (Kamungi, 2001)

The attempt to correct the economic and political imbalances between the Kikuyu, the Kalenjin and the Luo usually results in violence. There seems to be no proper mechanism of peace and conflict resolutions that can bring these ethnic groups together. In 2007 the international community had to step in and Kofi Annan was appointed to mediate the peace and conflict resolution process. This led to new election rules being put in place, hence a peaceful election in 2013.

Some Scholars have argued that the media played a major role in the 2007 election violence i.e. Vernacular radio stations were used to spread hate speeches and to incite violence. (Landau et al 2009; Ellis, 1994). Perpetrators of the violence in all elections have also never been held accountable. The government does not investigate or take any action to prevent future election violence. Some government officials and politicians have incited the violence, manipulated the electoral process without ever being prosecuted. This has usually led to a recurring cycle of election violence.

The institutional explanation suggests that violence following the 1992 elections was mainly caused by ethnic conflicts between the Luo and the Kikuyu. The violence left more than 300,000 displaced internally due to loss of property. The 1992, 1997 and 2007 election violence were caused by ethnic animosity, unemployment, inequality of resources, and lack of political leaders to address the root causes of the violence and displacement.

Several scholars have focused on various causes of the election violence ranging from ethnic divisions, land, media and party leaders. However, few have connected political entrepreneurs

with ethnicity through opportunities created by party systems. The key to non-violence and tolerance is coalitions share similar ethnic groups. For example, the Kalenjin in several coalitions during one election year.

## **THEORY AND HYPOTHESIS**

While the literature is divided along three theoretical explanations for the election violence in Kenya: historical ethnic divisions, social cleavages and institutional such as politicized ethnic parties and coalitions, it is unclear which one had the greatest influence on election violence in Kenya. Of course, all three explanations played a role in the violence, but few studies have compared all three explanations especially across the Kenyan elections from independence to 2013.

### *Ethnic Cleavages*

A number of scholars including Lynch (2006), Kimenyi (2008) and Elischer (2008) suggest that the dominant explanation for the election violence is ethnic cleavages and continuous divisions. Despite the economic and political changes the same groups are at the root of the election violence.

Ethnic cleavages have existed in Kenya since time immemorial. They still have a major influence on election violence today. Political party leaders base most of their hopes on their ethnic groups. Campaigns are usually done in vernacular an indication that the leaders only seek to community to certain group of people as opposed to the nation as a whole. Ajulu and Jonjo argue that Kenyans vote for the party that best represents their ethnic group (Ajulu (2002): Jonjo (2002).

The effect of ethnicity on voter behavior and consequently election outcome is most evident in presidential elections, in parliamentary elections held in constituencies. Although Kenyans resist defining themselves in ethnic terms, voting in Kenya is therefore defensively and fundamentally an ethnic census (Kimenyi, 2008). Thus, the hypothesis:

*H1*: If there are several (over two) static ethnic parties that reflect historical ethnic cleavages, then we expect greater election violence. The main idea is that we expect political parties and coalitions that do not change ethnic composition over time are more prone to violence when it comes to elections and claiming government authority. The implication is that static ethnic parties with similar (unchanging) ethnic composition over time are the source of election conflict.

### *Social Cleavages*

Cheeseman (2008) and Holmquist (2009) find that the influence of ethnic cleavages is overstated and the changes in economic opportunities have created greater gaps in society. This gap is at the root of the election violence. Most voters in Kenya seem to hope for better living conditions whenever they go to the polls. However this never seems to be the case. All they see are poor roads, water shortages, poor health facilities, low education standards, unemployment and a total lack of concern from their chosen leaders. They seem to indicate their grievance on economic issues.

When deciding the party to support, voters consider, among other factors, the economy, government performance, and how the country is doing generally.

Economic voting is typically understood as ‘any change in a voter’s support for parties that are caused by a change in economic perceptions’ (Easterly, 1997)

When voters face economic hardships they tend to apportion blame on the ruling party even for their personal woes and therefore vote against it in protest (Ndegwa, 1997). In the African context and in Kenya, the level of poverty can range from lack of food and hunger to those with several homes and vehicles. This gap can create tensions especially during elections.

Thus, Social Cleavages such as economic divisions in society influence election violence. Political entrepreneurs use class as a tool when campaigning to win elections (Rothschild, 1981). Although voters do not solely base their choices of political parties on party ideology, the issue low income, poor living conditions and the unequal distribution of resources (land) influence most election violence. Hence the hypothesis:

*H2:* If there are several political parties organized around economic groups especially the poor, then we expect greater election violence. Thus we expect to see multi-ethnic parties that represent economic groups particularly the poor. This suggests that poorer classes are united into single parties or coalitions based on class rather than ethnicity. The implication is that economic divisions driving force behind election violence.

### *Institutional Theory*

Horowitz (1985), Ajulu (2002), Posner (2007) and Altman (2000) find that historical ethnic divisions and social cleavages alone are not enough to generate election violence because there are ethnically divided societies with peaceful election. It is the formation of political parties and politicized ethnic groups that are at the root of the violence including the use of the media to raise tensions. Political institutions in the county have been designed not as a social

impact between rulers and the ruled but as agreements between members of the ruling elite to manage access to power amongst them (Holmquist, 2007).

Political parties and election institutions in Kenya are usually manipulated by politicians. The electoral commission that was created in 2002 to oversee the elections process, but it has no authority over the incumbent politicians. Moreover, the members of the commission are usually bribed and this leads to unfair elections. Most of the election violence has been a result of the anger towards election irregularities and incumbent leaders attempt to stay in power. Given the weak election institutions and oversight, it is not uncommon for politicians to believe that they can get away with trying to manipulate elections or incite violence. It was only after the severe violence of the 2007 elections that the government finally realized a need to replace the existing election rules. That is strengthening the election commission and making sure incumbent leaders cannot manipulate the process.

Mueller (2011) explains that the problems faced in Kenya's transition to democracy are manifested in its weak institutions and that this change is difficult to analyze in causal terms or to address. He gives three factors that contributed to the 2007 election violence: "a gradual decline in the state's monopoly of legitimate force and a consequent generalized level of violence not always within its control: deliberately weak institutions, mostly overridden by a highly personalized and centralized presidency, that could and did not exercise the autonomy or checks and balances normally associated with democracies; and political parties that were not programmatic, were driven by ethnicity, and had a winner-take-all view of political power and its associated economic rewards" (Mueller, 2011).

While Muller suggests a several factors, one of the key elements in this explanation is the party system and ethnicity. In this case, election violence is due to the party system and

politicized ethnicity rather than changes in economic conditions and carried out by different social groups (multi-ethnic social groups) or simply continuous historical divisions. The key explanation is that a larger number of ethnically charged parties and coalitions tend to be less tolerant and more violent during the elections than a smaller number of larger broad based parties that tend to be more tolerant.

*H3:* If there are coalitions with similar ethnic groups at the time of the elections, then we expect less post-election violence. The larger coalitions and parties represent a broader range of ethnic and economic interests and this can reduce tensions between groups especially if the opposition can continue to represent their constituents (broad base of support) after and between the elections.

### CHAPTER 3: METHODS

This research is was qualitative analysis that used comparative case study method (Ragin 1987, Yin 2003). I treat each election as a case and compare different election years in Kenya. This involved an in-depth study of all issues surrounding each election in the years 1992, 1997, 2002, 2007, and 2013. Using data from scholarly publications, official reports, non-governmental organizations, surveys and the media, I evaluate whether or not the election process resulted in violence. . These reports are freely accessible to the public on the Afro barometer database.

The election years 1992, 1997, 2002, 2007 and 2013 were my case studies. First I studied whether or not there was election violence. If the answer is Yes, then I studied the level of the violence (high/low), causalities (number, property damage (amount), duration of the violence (time) including a) spontaneous inter-ethnic violence b) Organized attacks against targeted communities c) organized retaliatory attacks. If the answer was No, then I studied the positive reports, how long the electoral process was, and how many voted. Other causes of election violence that were also studied included: Ethnic Divisions at the time of the election and just before, Political Party system, The makeup of coalitions – violence (or lack of violence) in the party system elections, Election Rules- Role of the Kenya electoral commission in the elections and Media – the use of vernacular radio stations to reduce or incite violence.

#### *Data Collection*

The data collected on the history of political transition in Kenya, the formation of political parties, and the impact of ethnicity was collected from scholarly materials. The main sources included books and journals. Other secondary data were publications of the government reports and surveys from Afro barometer which are freely available to the public.

### *Analysis Procedure*

I examined the transition in each election year in an attempt to find out whether or not ethnic divisions contributed to election violence. To achieve this, the study adopted the Mill's Indirect Method of Difference approach (Ragin, 1987) where, I identified variations in the dependent variable (Election Violence) using datasets on ethnic clashes in Kenya. I compared the formation of political parties and examined the influence of ethnic divisions on election violence. To see whether ethnic party coalitions in 2002 and 2013, influenced the electoral process, I compared the election of 1992, 1997 that did not have ethnic party coalitions. 2007 was different in that although there were party coalitions the groups involved in these parties helped to indicate the main cause of violence in elections. The five cases selected in this study represent the election years with and without post-election violence in Kenya. These make up the years in which Kenya was a multiparty system.

This study tested the following hypotheses:

**H1:** If there are several (over two) static ethnic parties that reflect historical ethnic cleavages, then we expect greater election violence.

**H2:** If there are several political parties organized around economic groups especially the poor, then we expect greater election violence.

**H3:** If there are coalitions with similar ethnic groups at the time of the elections, then we expect less post-election violence.

### *Operational Definitions*

The measure of poor or people living in poverty is defined as those who do not regularly go hungry. In Kenya as with other developing nations, the level of poverty is determined by access to basic needs especially food. In the 2006, Afrobarometer survey of Kenya, only 40 of the respondents reported that their family has never gone without food during the past year, and 18 percent stated that their family frequently or always gone without food. Thus the operational definition is the survey question from the Afrobarometer “Over the past year, how often, if ever, have you or your family gone without: Enough food to eat?” The response is Never, Just Once or Twice, Several Times, Many Times and Always.

Historical ethnic cleavages are relationships between ethnic groups that have been in existence ever since. The divide and rule policy introduced by the British resulted in a disturbance historical ethnicity. Election violence is any harm or threat of harm to any person or property involved in the election process (International Foundation for election systems). Ethnic Parties are parties that have an affiliation to a particular ethnic group. Ethnic based Coalitions are coalitions of ethnic parties that come together with a common goal and an intension to win the elections. This could be the coalition with the traditional ethnic groups aligned against the ethnic groups with historical tensions.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The data shows that whenever the leaders of a particular ethnic group agree to form a broader partnership with a leader from another tribe the members of these coalitions respect their decisions and vote for the unified group. More importantly the broader based the coalition, the greater the level of tolerance for the opposition and less election violence.

### *Ethnic Cleavages*

There is such a strong sense of respect for leaders in these ethnic communities that individuals do not seem to make their own decisions whenever they go to vote. Voters are usually enticed with money and given false promises on what they will get if they voted for a particular candidate. The main reason behind the formation of coalitions is to overpower other ethnic groups. This has been a disadvantage to those groups that are fewer in number. Table 1 (see Appendix) summarizes the number of political parties and their ethnic affiliation. It clearly explains how various ethnic groups join different coalitions. For example, in 2013 most of the coalition's parties were formed between alliances of multiple ethnic groups. However this was not the case in 2002 where only two ethnic groups the Kalenjin and Kikuyu came together to form the National Rainbow Alliance (NARC). The elections also had parties formed within a single ethnic groups such as KANU and FORD.

Evidence suggests that ethnic conflicts have also emerged as a result of politicization of the ethnic groups. Politicized ethnicity has been known to create the “in group” and the “out group” with the latter trying to break the structure of inequality as the former responds by building barriers that ensure the continuation of its privileged position. Political parties in Kenya are based on ethnic divisions and alliances which cause election violence (Stiftung, (2010); Barkan & Okumu, (1979).

Przeworski (1991) suggests that democracy requires legal institutions and a party system that makes sure the losers are treated fairly after the elections. In short, democracy depends on how the losers in the national elections are treated. Even if you have a free and fair election, if the winner takes all, then the next election will be a battle among parties to see who can win and control resources.

When many or even several parties believe they have to win so they will not be "outside" of the government until the next election, then election violence is more likely. Hence, my hypothesis *H1*: If there are several (over two) static ethnic parties that reflect historical ethnic cleavages, then we expect greater election violence. The main idea is that we expect political parties and coalitions that do not change ethnic composition over time are more prone to violence when it comes to elections and claiming government authority. The implication is that static ethnic parties are the source of election conflict.

The data suggests that whenever political parties form broad based coalitions that dilute ethnic divisions the result is a peaceful election. Whereas a larger number of political parties that are polarized along ethnic divisions there is an increased chance of an election violence.

Map1 (see Appendix) shows how historical ethnic boundaries created by the colonialists influence how Kenyans are separately according to ethnic groups. The geographical distribution of ethnic groups causes a great divide making it impossible for all of the 42 ethnic groups to live as citizens of one nation.

Kenya's political arena as Ajulu states has been ethnically mediated. He continues to state that ethnicity has become the medium through which class politics is mediated" (Ajulu, 2003). Elites also contribute to election violence by exploiting the 'stolen election' sentiment and

mobilize certain groups of voters into committing violence against other ethnic groups (Elischer, 2013).

### *Social Cleavages*

Social cleavages in Kenya are based on social class status. There is a huge difference between the rich and the poor. The gap between the two is wide. The poor have always felt like they have been marginalized and they feel like people of certain communities especially those in power are being favored in times of money and resources. These grievances have usually resulted in violence during and after national elections. Violence seems to be the only way to be heard.

Gurr (1968) used relative deprivation to explain political violence. Classes and groups in society that feel they are not receiving what they deserve relative to other members of society will revolt or align with political parties and movements that represent their interests. This suggests that the poorest Kenyan voters will become more unified to get their voices heard and needs addressed. Thus the poorest Kenyan voters will affiliate with the party that best address their concerns and they should be voting for the same party regardless of their ethnicity.

Because class is difficult to measure across cultures and income levels are also difficult to measure in Kenya, the frequency of going without food is used as a measure for poverty. I use this measure for social cleavages and to measure the poorest in terms of income. If the poorer voters align with a party despite ethnic identification, then social cleavages is an explanation for election violence. However, if the poorer voters are spread equally (relatively equally) among parties then social cleavages is not the explanation.

Tables 2 and 3 (see appendix) display the relationship between poverty (hunger) and party affiliation. The data suggests that level of poverty does not influence party affiliation.

That is, the proportion of those who never go without food and those who always or frequently go without food is about the same for each major party. This non-unified party affiliation among the poorest voters hold for both the 2007 and the 2012 election cycles. Therefore poverty and hunger is not a clear indication of party affiliation.

### *Ethnicity and Institutions*

In Table 4 (see Appendix), I find that just before the 2012 elections when Kenyans were asked: “If a presidential election were held tomorrow, which party or candidate would you vote for?” The data suggest that party and coalition affiliations do not reflect strict historical ethnic cleavages as in some of the previous violent elections. The main idea is that, the researcher observed political parties and coalitions that can change ethnic composition over time and possibly become more tolerant of other groups. .

The implication is that previously static ethnic parties were the source of election conflict. The data show that political parties can consist of various ethnic groups and keep changing with every election year. For example, The Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) in 2007 consisted of ethnic groups that have a recent history of conflict such as Kikuyus, Luo, Luhya, Kamba, and Kalenjin. While the proportion of ethnic groups with the coalition varies, it is still a significant development and reflects broad based coalitions. Indeed, according to the Commission of Enquiry into Post- [2007] Election Violence, coalitions of parties affect inter- party competition hence reducing the chances of election violence (‘The Waki Report’. Nairobi, Kenya 2008).

The 2002 elections were peaceful. (Brown, 2002) argues that the 2002 elections were peaceful because of the following reasons:

- (i) The opposition was far more united than in the two previous elections of 1992/97
- (ii) The media was independent media and leaders would have freedom of speech.
- (iii) There was a shift in popular attitudes that would no longer tolerate foul play, taken as evidence of the effectiveness of 10 years of civic education.

**Table 5 Number of Parties and Election Violence (condensed Table)**

	No Violence	Violence	Violence	No Violence	Violence	No Violence
YEAR	Before 1992	1992	1997	2002	2007	2013
Parties and Coalitions at the time of election	2P	4P	5 P	1 C 2 P	3 C 4 P	5 C

C= Coalitions, P = Parties

The data rejects the traditional ethnic conflict hypothesis H1 and the social cleavages hypothesis H2, and supports the institutional hypothesis H3 The larger coalitions and parties represent a broader range of ethnic and economic interests and this can reduce tensions between groups especially if the opposition can continue to represent their constituents (broad base of support) after and between the elections.

The formation of coalitions has transformed the political system in Kenya and how voters make their decisions. Whenever they have several ethnic groups joining forces as one then ethnicity is not a factor but the main purpose/goal of the coalition is then considered. Political leaders play a major role in the formation of ethnic coalitions which in turn influence the outcome of elections and determine occurrence or non-occurrence of violence.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION**

To answer my research question: Do ethnic divisions influence elections violence? The answer is NO, but political violence is linked with ethnicity through political entrepreneurs and party system. The party system and coalitions have a significant influence in the violence. The limitations of the study lies in the inability of the researcher to give interviews and to travel to Kenya to get primary data.

As a result of my study, the researcher found that historical ethnic, economic, and institutional cleavages play a major role. On the contrary another school of thought by Horowitz argues that electoral violence in Kenya is caused by social inequality and political exclusion. The data rejects the ethnicity explanation as Jonyo states that ethnic groups have a way of influencing the election outcome. This he says has led to a major division in ethnic groups hence a major factor that voters consider whenever they go to the polls (Jonyo, 2002).

Political parties and party coalitions play a major role in the division of ethnic communities in Kenya. It is however, evident that whenever two or more ethnic groups come together in support of one party the chance of violence is reduced. This may be a good tool in preventing future election violence based on ethnic divisions. Teachings against ethnic divisions may be necessary in promoting peace.

Party leaders have also been known to exploit the ethnic divisions hence using it to their advantage. It is important to note that elections in Kenya have been peaceful whenever historical ethnic differences were put aside and all the people come together as one nation. The election rules should be looked into thoroughly so that there are no loop holes to enable any party leaders to steal the vote. This has been known to be one of the driving forces in some of the election violence situations. From my findings so far, a sustainable solution must aim to resolve the

escalation of electoral violence within the polity. Only then would Kenya have the national resolve and political will for containing electoral violence in the future.

The largest and most influential ethnic coalition is NARC- National Rainbow Coalition, which was formed by the opposition in 2002. This coalition was responsible for the ousting of President Arap Moi out of power. This victory was however, short lived since in 2007 the same ethnic groups such as the Luo, Kikuyu and Kalenjin were back to competing for power.

Kenya should aim at seeking peace and security and everything else will likely follow, given its bloody history, historic wrongs, social injustices and asymmetrical nature of power politics in the electoral system. Knowledge alone is not enough for good citizenship, it must be combined with attitudes which promote justice, peaceful co-existence and the inevitable concept of interdependence between different ethnic groups. It should be an education that equips the recipients with skills in such areas as critical thinking, informed decision-making and developing mutually responsible and supportive social ties. This kind of education should provide the recipients with a commitment to becoming involved personally and communally in promotion of the above virtues of public education.

There must be civic education campaign programs to avert the potential danger of inter-ethnic animosity as a consequence of the introduction of multi-party political system and the differentials in access to national resources. This campaigns should address the issues of inter-ethnic harmony and peaceful co-existence among Kenya's plural ethnic society.

The citizens should be taught the sources and causes of conflicts as well as the skills of conflict resolution and how to promote peace at all levels. For instance, at local community school level, to national and international levels.

Leaders should take the initiative of organizing seminars and conferences to sensitize the public in general and opinion leaders in particular, the need for inter-ethnic harmony, peaceful co-existence and the need to promote a sustainable nationhood.

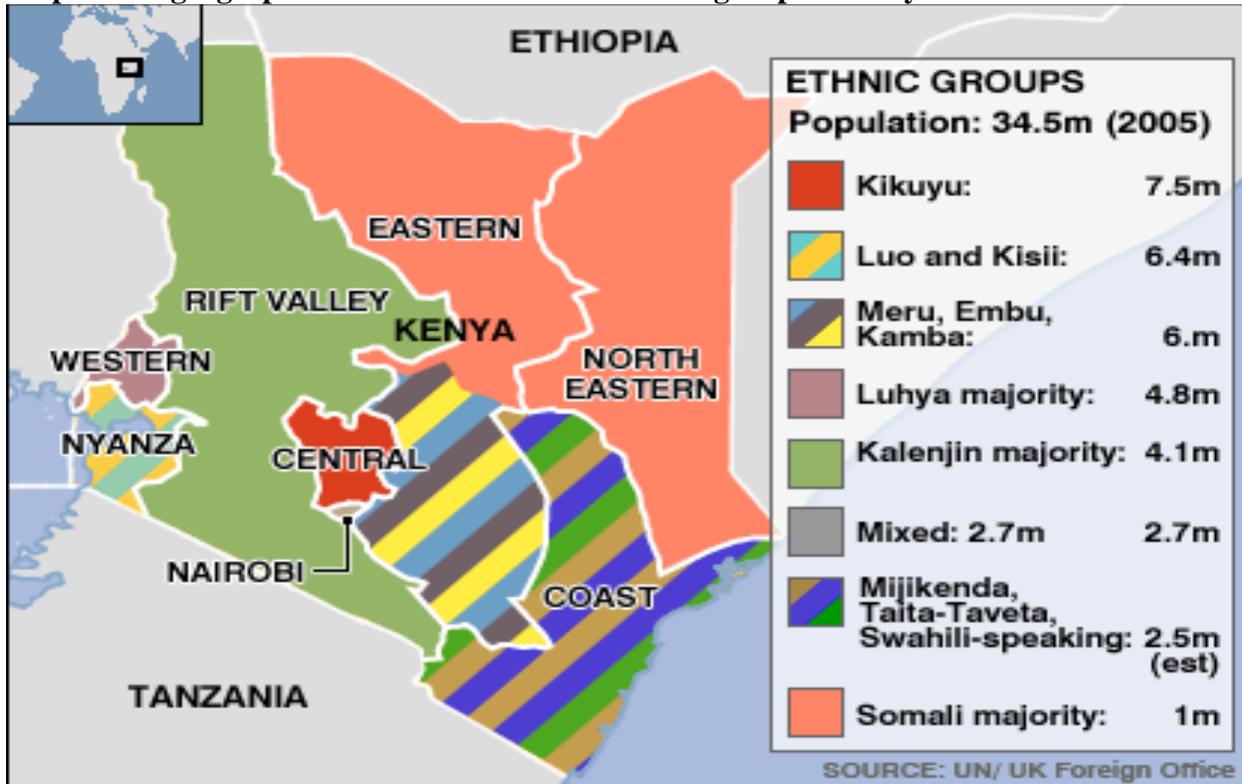
## Appendix

**Table 1. Election Violence, Ethnicity and the Distribution and Number of Parties at Each Election**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Political Party</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Election Violence</b>
<b>1992</b>	KANU	KALENJIN	YES
	FORD-A	LUHYA	
	DP	KIKUYU	
	Ford-K	LUO	
<b>1997</b>	KANU	KALENJIN	YES
	DP	KIKUYU	
	NDP	LUO	
	FORD-A	LUHYA	
	SDP	KAMBA	
<b>2002</b>	<b>NARC</b>	KIKUYU/LUO	NO
	KANU	KALENJIN	
	FORD-P	KISII	
<b>2007</b>	<b>PNU</b>	KIKUYU	YES
	ODM	LUO/KALENJIN	
	FORD-K	LUHYA	
	CCU	MAASAI	
	PICK	KISII	
	KADU	POKOMO/MIJIKENDA	
	KENDA	LUHYA	
<b>2013</b>	COALITIONS REFORMS DEMOCRACY	KALENJIN/KIKUYU	NO
	JUBILEE ALLIANCE	KIKUYU/KALENJIN/LUO	
	EAGLE ALLIANCE	KIKUYU/MAASAI/KALENJIN	

PAMBAZUKA ALLIANCE      KAMBA/BUKUSU/LUO  
 AMANI COALITION        LUHYA/GIRIAMA

**Map 1. The geographic distribution of the 14 ethnic groups in Kenya**



Population 34.5m, comprising more than 40 ethnic groups Kikuyu are the largest tribe, mostly concentrated around Nairobi Most of Eastern/ North-eastern regions sparsely populated with ethnic Somalis Main ethnic groups are:

**Kikuyu: 22%, Luhya: 14%, Luo: 13%, Kalenjin: 12%, Kamba: 11%, Kisii: 6%, Meru: 6%, Other African: 15%**

Source: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7168551.stm>

**Table 2 Afrobarometer Survey 2006 “Vote for party and how often gone without food”**

	Total	Never	Just once or twice	Several times	Many times	Always
<i>National Rainbow Coalition</i>						
(NARC)	42%	45%	38%	44%	41%	26%
Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)	15%	13%	23%	12%	11%	22%
Democratic Party of Kenya (DP)	2%	3%	1%	1%	1%	2%
Ford-Kenya (Ford-K)	1%	2%	0%	3%	1%	-
Ford People (Ford-P)	1%	1%	1%	1%	-	-
<i>Kenya African National Union</i>						
(KANU)	16%	14%	15%	18%	23%	13%
National Party of Kenya (NPK)	0%	0%	-	1%	0%	-
Shirikisho	0%	-	0%	1%	-	-
Ford Asili (Ford-A)	0%	0%	-	-	1%	-
Social Democratic Party (SDP)	0%	0%	-	-	-	-
Other	0%	-	-	-	1%	-
Not applicable	5%	5%	5%	5%	4%	7%
Refused	5%	5%	4%	5%	4%	11%
Don't know	12%	13%	10%	11%	12%	18%
Missing data	1%	1%	2%	0%	1%	1%
Total	1,278	508	299	244	168	59

Source: Afrobarometer Survey 2006

Survey Question: If a presidential election were held tomorrow, which party's candidate would you vote for?

**Table 3 Afrobarometer Survey 2012 “Vote for party and how often gone without food”**

	Total	Never	Just once or twice	Several times	Many times	Always
<i>KEN: Orange Democratic Movement Party (ODM)</i>	35%	29%	45%	35%	38%	24%
<i>KEN: Orange Democratic Movement Party of Kenya (ODM-K)</i>	5%	4%	3%	7%	4%	3%
<i>KEN: Party of National Unity (PNU)</i>	20%	25%	18%	18%	13%	33%
KEN: National Rainbow Coalition (NARC)	1%	2%	0%	1%	2%	5%
KEN: NARK-Kenya	2%	3%	1%	1%	1%	-
KEN: Democratic Party of Kenya (DP)	0%	0%	0%	0%	-	-
KEN: Ford Kenya (Ford -K)	1%	0%	1%	1%	-	-
KEN: Ford People (Ford -P)	0%	-	-	-	1%	-
KEN: Kenya African National Union (KANU)	2%	2%	0%	2%	3%	4%
KEN: National Party of Kenya (NPK)	*	0%	-	-	-	-
KEN: Safina	0%	0%	-	0%	-	-
KEN: Kenya African Democratic Development Union (KADDU)	0%	-	-	0%	-	-
KEN: KADDU -Asili	*	-	0%	-	-	-
KEN: United Democratic Party of Kenya (UDM)	3%	5%	2%	3%	1%	2%
KEN: New Ford Kenya (New Ford -K)	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	-
KEN: G7	0%	0%	-	0%	0%	-
Others	0%	0%	0%	-	-	-
Would not vote	4%	5%	3%	3%	4%	8%
Missing; Unknown	0%	0%	-	0%	-	-
No answer;Refused to answer	7%	7%	6%	7%	10%	-
Don't know	19%	17%	18%	21%	23%	22%
Total	2,399	1,033	490	567	280	25

Source: Afrobarometer Survey 2012

Survey questions: “If a presidential election were held tomorrow, which party’s candidate would you vote for?”

**Table 4. Party Affiliation and Tribe or Ethnic Group**

	<u>Total</u>	<u>KEN: Kikuyu</u>	<u>KEN : Luo</u>	<u>KEN: Luhya</u>	<u>KEN: Kamba</u>	<u>KEN: Kalenjin</u>
KEN: Orange Democratic Movement Party (ODM)	35 %	4%	77%	52%	26%	22%
KEN: Orange Democratic Movement Party of Kenya (ODM-K)	5% 20	1%	0%	2%	31%	-
KEN: Party of National Unity (PNU)	%	55%	1%	9%	12%	8%
KEN: National Rainbow Coalition (NARC)	1%	3%	0%	0%	2%	1%
KEN: NARK-Kenya	2%	1%	1%	2%	2%	-
KEN: Democratic Party of Kenya (DP)	0%	0%	-	-	0%	-
KEN: Ford Kenya (Ford -K)	1%	-	-	3%	-	-
KEN: Ford People (Ford -P)	0%	-	-	-	-	-
KEN: Kenya African National Union (KANU)	2%	5%	0%	0%	0%	3%
KEN: National Party of Kenya (NPK)	*	0%	-	-	-	-
KEN: Safina	0%	-	-	-	-	-
KEN: Kenya African Democratic Development Union (KADDU)	0%	-	-	-	-	1%
KEN: KADDU -Asili	*	-	-	-	-	0%
KEN: United Democratic Party of Kenya (UDM)	3%	1%	1%	1%	1%	33%
KEN: New Ford Kenya (New Ford -K)	0%	-	-	1%	-	-

Source: Afro barometer Survey 2012

Survey Question: If a presidential election were held tomorrow, which party's candidate would you vote for?

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