

# ***Why do Kenyans vote along ethnic lines?***

***A Study of Underlying Rationales  
for Kenyan Electoral Behaviour***

**(31,386 words)**

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## **Abbreviations and Acronyms**

CIPEV	Commission of Inquiry into the Post Election Violence
CDF	Constituency Development Fund
DP	Democratic Party
ECK	Electoral Commission of Kenya
FORD	Forum for the Restoration of Democracy
IPPG	Inter-Parties Parliamentary Group
KADU	Kenya African Democratic Union
KANU	Kenya African National Union
KAU	Kenya Africa Union
KHRC	Kenya Human Rights Commission
KPU	Kenya Peoples Union
LDP	Liberal Democratic Party
NDP	National Democratic Party
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MPs	Member(s) of Parliament
NPK	National Party of Kenya
NAK	National Alliance Party of Kenya
NARC	National Rainbow Coalition
ODM	Orange Democratic Movement
ODM-K	Orange Democratic Movement-Kenya
PNU	Party of National Unity
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

# Map of Kenya



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## **Chapter 1 - Introduction**

On 27 December 2007, Kenya held its fourth multiparty elections since the democratic opening in the early 1990s. When the Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK) a few days later announced the winner to be the sitting president Mwai Kibaki, the country was plunged into a deep political, security and humanitarian crisis. The pre-election campaign was marked by a political rhetoric with strong ethnic undertones and a mobilisation that divided the country along ethnic lines. The turmoil and violence that ravaged the country led to the killing of over 1,200 people and the displacement of another 350,000 (Andreassen et al. 2008:5).

Did we witness the end-result of an ethnic electoral battle where voters were driven exclusively by ethnic grudges and loyalties? The violence was undoubtedly ethnic in its character, but what about the election results and the rationales behind the electoral behaviour of the almost 10 million voters (Weis 2008:3) who cast their vote? Ethnicity is not the only significant marker in Kenyan politics, and to be able to give good answers to such questions the causal mechanisms behind Kenyan electoral behaviour must be addressed. There are reasons to believe that socio-economic policies and issues affecting the economic well-being of groups, communities or individuals could be equally important factors when explaining the Kenyan voting patterns.

To most people Kenya had previously been seen as a haven of peace and stability in a troubled region, but the post-election crisis challenged the perception of Kenya as a stable and well-functioning democracy. While part of the international community reacted with surprise and shock to the events following the election, others interpreted them simply as the inevitable culmination of political tension that had been developing for decades. The turmoil and ethnic violence was however nothing new, except perhaps for the scale of it, as similar events occurred in connection with elections both in 1992 and 1997. These historic patterns strengthen the need and cause to re-examine the rationales and mechanisms behind Kenyan electoral behaviour.

The international media portrayed the post-election violence as an ethnic conflict. African countries are known to vote on ethnic lines, Kenya among them. However, although there undoubtedly was an ethnic dimension to the conflict arising after the 2007 general elections, the underlying issues are more complex than just ethnicity. Anderson and Lochery (2008:1) state that “violence is a process, not an event. Violent acts may be spontaneous, but they are more often the product of a longer sequence of historical decisions and political actions”. There is a general agreement that what triggered the post election violence in 2008 was a flawed election (Anderson and Lochery 2008: ICG report 2008: Waki report 2008). This tells us that elections and election results are important to the Kenyan people, and that voting matters. From previous experiences it seems like referenda and elections set off something inside many Kenyans that makes them fight for their interest and rights (Chitere et al 2006, Andreassen et al 2008). This spurs us to examine what these interests and rights are? Is it only ethnic affiliation that matters when Kenyans vote, or are there other interests that trigger Kenyans when they decide who to vote for? Or could it be a mixture of ethnicity and political preferences?

Most literature points to ethnicity as the main factor explaining electoral behaviour in Kenya, and there is no denying that ethnic affiliation and loyalty play a significant role in determining electoral choice, but ethnicity can also be seen as an epiphenomenon - however, there are material foundations of ethnic thinking that are often not brought to the fore (Tostensen 2008:8).

The question of distribution of land and debate on the form of government in the constitution has been two controversial issues since independence. And in the 2007 general election the two main parties provided different answers to these two controversial issues. A new constitutional order, the devolution of power and an equitable distribution of resources and land were presented as the ODM’s (Orange Democratic Movement) agenda. The PNU (Party of National Unity) campaigned with the motto *Kazi iendelelee* (“Work continues”) and emphasised economic recovery – the steady 5-6 per cent growth rate during the second half of Kibaki’s presidency allowed

Kenya to become financially self-reliant; Kibaki could therefore fund free primary education and create the constituency development funds (ICG 2008:4). Andreassen et al. (2008:8) state that in the election manifestos of the two main parties in the 2007 election, the PNU can be seen as a conventional conservative party in the European sense and the ODM as a social democratic party concerned with distribution and power sharing. On this background, there are reasons to suggest that Kenyans vote for different parties and presidents on grounds of their different political conviction.

### **1.1 Research question**

A debate on the relative importance of cultural identities and economic interests can be found in the literature of mass electoral behaviour (Crawford 1998). For advanced democracies, analysts agree that elections usually take the form of a referendum on the economy, with voters rewarding or punishing incumbent political parties at the ballot box depending on their past policy performance. Voters in new democracies and deeply divided societies are more commonly held to rely on cultural attachments when deciding how to vote. Norris and Mattes (2003) find that ethnicity and linguistic cleavages are important in explaining an individual's support for parties in power in most, but not all, African countries. Identity voting is strongest in ethnically fragmented societies.

If you lay a map of Kenya's ethnic population over a map of the pattern of electoral results, you can clearly draw the conclusion that Kenyans vote ethnically. My interest in this thesis is why the circumstantial evidence shows that Kenyans vote ethnically. Although a lot has been written on ethnicity and ethno-politics in Kenya, there have been fewer attempts trying to explain the relationship between ethnic identities and policy interests. When it comes to the decisive act of voting, what do Kenyans care about? Are their ethnic origins the only point of departure, or are they equally or even more concerned about policy interests such as personal economic well-being, the performance of the economy, and the government's record. The general question

addressed in the study may thus be formulated simply as: *Why do Kenyans vote along ethnic lines?*

There may be a number of reasons why Kenyans vote ethnically. My preliminary hypothesis is that they do so mainly because they believe their particular electoral choices will benefit their economic interests, either directly as individuals or as members of certain groups or communities. This would then further imply that ethnicity acts as an intermediate variable or an epiphenomenon that in many cases serves as means to an end. Since it is impossible to explore all the different variables that affect how Kenyans vote, my research is based on a selection of different electoral theories that will be supplemented with theories of ethnicity. In my analysis I use both primary sources, in form of interviews and direct observation, and secondary sources in form of literature on political crisis, electoral behaviour and ethnicity.

## **1.2 Structure of the Thesis**

Chapter 1 is introducing the thesis and explaining the research question.

Chapter 2 describes the political developments leading up to independence and the demographic developments that followed during the period of the settlement schemes, which are so critical to understanding Kenyan voting behaviour. It further describes the evolution of political parties and presents the political developments in the 1990s. Finally, it describes the development from the historical 2002 election up until the election violence around the 2007 election.

Chapter 3 lays the theoretical framework. It presents different theories of rational electoral behaviour and different theories of ethnicity and ethnopolitics. It will also discuss the role of political institutions and political entrepreneurs in politicising ethnic identity, and finally try to connect ethnic affiliation with the other political motivations for electoral behaviour.

Chapter 4 presents the methodological approach. I have placed this chapter here in order to ensure that it's read in connection with the analysis, which is predominantly based on interviews made through my field work. The process of undertaking the field work and interviews is described thoroughly in chapter four and I believe it's an advantage for the reader to have a clear recollection of this methodological approach when reading my analysis.

Chapter 5 analyses the interplay between ethnicity and rational socio-economic voting behaviour. The chapter is organized around the theoretical perspectives presented in chapter three, and draws on and presents the key findings coming out of my field work.

Chapter 6 goes through the major findings and draw conclusions.

## **Chapter 2 - Background to Kenya**

Kenya became a colony under the British Crown in 1895 when it was incorporated into the British East Africa protectorate, joining Uganda that had become a part of the protectorate a year before. In 1920 Kenya came under fully fledged colonial rule with a legislative council consisting of only Europeans (Rosenberg and Nottingham 1966:20). The first political party created by Kenyans was the Kenya Africa Union (KAU) in 1946, under the leadership of Harry Thuku. Jomo Kenyatta (1891-1978) returned to Kenya in 1947 after many years of studies and work in Great Britain. He took over the leadership in KAU immediately after his return and started the fight for Kenyan independence. When Kenya gained independence from colonial rule in 1963, it set up a Westminster style of government with Jomo Kenyatta as the prime minister and KANU (Kenya African National Union) as the incumbent political party.

This chapter starts by a brief account of political events from colonial times up to the independence in 1963, and the process of establishing settlement schemes. The following sections describe the evolution of political parties and the political developments in the 1990s. The final section describes the development from the historical 2002 election up until the election violence around the 2007 election. The political developments leading up to independence and the demographic developments of the settlement schemes are central to understanding the development from a one-party state to a multi-party state in the 1990s, and crucial for understanding Kenyan voting behaviour.

### **2.1 The run-up to independence**

Unlike many other African colonies, Kenya became independent, indirectly, as a result of an armed rebellion: the Mau Mau uprising that lasted from 1952 to 1959, when it was eventually defeated by the colonial government. The roots of the Mau Mau have been traced back to the agrarian policies of Kenya, which include the land alienation of Africans during the colonial occupation (Throup 1987). The structure of land

ownership, and access to land in general, was an integral part of the reconfiguration of political order, fusing the issue of land, constitutional choice and local interests. The combination of these issues has been reflected in the country's two rounds of constitutional debates; one during the time of independence, the other began in the 1990s and is still ongoing. Both debates revolve around the question of land in the social economic order, and regional autonomy in the political order. I will return to this debate later.

### 2.1.1 Developments in Central Province

European agricultural settlement in Kenya followed in the wake of the "Uganda Railway" which was built between 1897 and 1901 from the Kenyan coastal town of Mombasa to Kampala in Uganda (Odingo 1971:27). In 1903 there were already 100 white settlers around the growing railway camp of Nairobi, and between then and 1960 there were a series of "waves" of settlers arriving from many sources, including Great Britain, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. In 1920 there were 1,122 settlers occupying 2,103 hectare of land in the whole of Kenya and in 1960 there were 3,600 settlers engaged in agriculture occupying 3 million hectares of land (Odingo 1971:40).

The Central Province of Kenya was chosen for occupation by white settlers because the land was fertile and the region was close to the growing market of Nairobi. The colonial government encouraged settlements in this area to increase railway traffic on the new railway. When the settlers arrived and settled, they began to push for a new set of policies that barred Africans from owning land in European "zones" and relegated them to "native reserves" (Bates:1989:19). The Kikuyu ethnic group originally occupied the Central Province, and land had for some time already become increasingly scarce due to population growth and subdivision of land. The confiscation of land and the creation of native reserves reinforced this trend. Earlier, land was relatively abundant; but with the white settlers grabbing huge areas of fertile land, this era was definitively over. The African population had plenty of labour, but lacked access to land.

### 2.1.2 Developments in the Rift Valley

At the same time, there was a growing need among the white settlers in the fertile highlands of Kenya's Rift Valley, later referred to as the White Highlands, for casual labour in their farming activities. Thus, driven by the overcrowded conditions in the reserves in central province and the white settlers' bid for labour in the White Highlands, about 150,000 Kikuyu from the Central Region migrated to the White Highlands – not as land owners, but as workers on European farms (Gisemba 2008:3). These labourers were called squatters. The squatter system was based on a labour contract, whereby a squatter had to work for at least 180 days of work a year in return for the cultivation of some of the white settlers' land and for grazing of livestock. The contracts were later expanded until in most cases they reached a level of 240 days a year (Odingo 1971:42).

The Kalenjin who originally occupied the land the white settlers took were also squatters. Since they traditionally were pastoralists they were not interested in land ownership and title deeds in the same way as the Kikuyus were. The Kalenjin were satisfied with grazing access for their herds. Land among the Kalenjin was not regulated by individual ownership, but by communal rights and access to pastures. The creation of individual land ownership during colonialism was an institutional change that worked in favour of the Kikuyu traditions. By changing the structure of land ownership, new incentives for individual and group choices and behaviour were created (Andreassen 2003:119). These events, and the new dynamics they set in motion, contributed to the creation of conflicts between Kalenjin and Kikuyu in the Rift Valley Province.

### 2.1.3 The Mau Mau

In the demobilisation of the armed forces after the World War II, demobilised officers were encouraged to purchase land in the colony of Kenya, and they were given training in the newly opened Egerton School of Agriculture in the Rift Valley (Bates 1989:24). This put more pressure on the African squatters, and the white settlers also used their political power to alter the original contracts with the squatters, reserving

the right to keep cattle in the Highlands for themselves. This eventually led to the resettlement of around 100,000 Kikuyu squatters back to the native reserves in Central Province, where they faced an economic reality quite different from what they had left (Gisemba 2008:3). The traditional Kikuyu areas were overcrowded and land values were high. The traditional Kikuyu elite used their power in this situation to maximize land rights for their family and kin. For the returnees from the white settler areas in the Rift Valley this had serious consequences. They felt they had been squeezed twice; first, by the white settlers and the colonial government who threw them out of the Rift Valley and, second, by their wealthy kinsmen who denied them returning to land in Central Province (Bates 1989:29). A militant radicalism evolved among the losers in the struggle for land rights in Central Province, organised from 1949 as the Mau Mau uprising. When national political leaders emerged in the late 1940s they used the mobilising potential of this radicalism to expand their political base. The Mau Mau came to represent the radical and militant wing of the nationalist, anti-colonial movement, but to a large degree this war also represented a civil war within the Kikuyu ethnic group.

#### 2.1.4 Settlement schemes

##### *Pre-colonial settlement schemes*

With the political conditions in the colony of Kenya having reached a precarious and volatile level in the 1940s, the colonial government attempted to forestall a political crisis by establishing “native settlement schemes” to relocate those evicted from the White Highlands. The Olenguruone settlement scheme located in the remote areas of the Rift Valley Highlands was one of the first of this kind. The colonial government purchased 37,400 acres of land in Olenguruone in the 1940s to relocate approximately 4,000 Kikuyu squatters who had been displaced by the white settlers (Kimenyi and Ndugu 2005:141). Little attempt was being made to deal with claims from indigenous groups to lands earmarked for settlement. Olenguruone was originally Masai and Kalenjin land and the settlement scheme created deep animosity between them and the new Kikuyu inhabitants. The colonial government created similar settlement schemes in other areas of the Rift Valley which all created similar animosity (Ibid).

After the Mau Mau was defeated in 1959, the colonial government responded to the looming political unrest by initiating a programme of rural development by supporting the growing and marketing of cash crops and a policy of land consolidation. The land consolidation programme abolished the former system of squatters in the Rift Valley. This created a class of “landless” squatters but, at the same time, the land was for sale to Africans who could afford to pay the price defined by the settlers; these were primarily wealthy Kikuyu (Rosenberg and Nottingham 1996:304). Thus, the right to land ownership was used as a measure by the colonial government to ally itself with the wealthy and the conservative elites, primarily among the Kikuyu. For the Kikuyu themselves this was an opportunity to settle again in the Rift Valley, but this time as land owners and not as squatters.

#### *Post-colonial settlement schemes*

The post-independence settlement schemes designed to transfer land from white settlers to Africans was similarly controversial. In a programme known as the Million Acre Settlement Scheme, carried out between 1962 and 1967, the new independent government bought a number of European farms – ostensibly to settle landless people (Kimenyi and Ndugu 2005:141). In the planning of the Million Acre Scheme the intention was that settlement areas would be taken over by communities already living in adjacent areas – so as to allow local communities to ‘take back’ lands that they had claimed prior to the advent of European settlement, or to take ownership of lands upon which they may have ‘squatted’ as tied labourers over many years (Anderson and Lochery 2008:7). The land was not to be given back freely to African occupation, however, but purchased at prevailing market rates. The transactions under the Million Acre Scheme were accordingly conducted on the basis of willing-buyer-willing-seller, and this condition quickly disrupted the initial intention to give priority primarily to local communities. A small number of schemes were reserved for landless farmers, with favourable leasing and credit arrangements. In the Rift Valley a variety of types of settlement scheme emerged, but only a small number was allocated solely for the use of local communities. By 1975 there were more than 250 government-sponsored settlement schemes throughout the country; the majority in the Rift Valley Province or

along its borders. More than 1,300 farms had been purchased for settlement by the government, and nearly 70,000 families had moved onto these schemes (Anderson and Lochery 2008:8).

The methods used for the allocation of plots on these schemes varied over time, but in the initial phase local administrators, including chiefs and headmen, compiled lists of squatters and landless, and a lottery was held. There appears to have been little complaint about this procedure, and the majority of those given land were in these situations anyway Kalenjin. However, from the late 1970s changes in the administrative procedures resulted in the transfer of the responsibility for allocating plots on the schemes to the provincial administration, thus placing the process under the direct control of the Office of the President (Ibid:9). This may have resulted in a greater degree of corruption in the allocations process. Anderson and Lochery (2008:9) also note that the ethnic patterns of occupancy on the schemes quickly became more complicated as settlers re-sold plots. The extent of this lively trading of land on settlement schemes was not anticipated when the schemes were first established, and it has had a dramatic impact on the ethnic composition of some areas. These schemes have been a source of ongoing quarrel over land in the Rift Valley. I will come back to this later in the chapter.

## 2.2 The evolution of political parties – KANU and KADU

As independence approached, the land issue emerged as an issue of major political controversy. In 1959 the British proposed a resettlement programme in the Highlands and in 1960 they established a new system where Africans were given majority status in the legislative and executive councils. The result of these changes was a scramble for power among competing local elites who formed two political parties: the Kenya African National Union (KANU) and the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU). At the centre of their differences lay conflicts over land (Bates 1989:46).

KANU was formed in March 1960 and although it was principally multicultural in its set-up, the new party was allegedly dominated by representatives from the Kikuyu and Luo communities (Andreassen 2003:130). The leadership denied such allegations, but the perception of KANU as a Kikuyu-Luo alliance nevertheless persisted among the smaller ethnic groups. Many smaller ethnic groups and their members, for instance the Masai and the Kalenjin, had lost tracts of their tribal land to the white settlers. In response to the formation of KANU many of these groups organised their own “welfare” associations, such as the Maasai United Front, the Kalenjin Political Alliance and the Coast African Political Union. In June 1960 these and other small ethnic groups coalesced to form KADU. The main difference between the parties was that KANU favoured a unitary form of government while KADU opted for a federalist or regionalist approach that favoured the set up of Majimbo (majimbo is the plural form of jimbo which means region) – ethnically constructed, autonomous regions governed by regional assemblies. KADU wanted to place land resources under regional political control and not, as did KANU, to allow the free-market principle of “willing seller – willing buyer” to operate (Andreassen 2003:131-134).

### 2.2.1 Constitutional debate and the dissolution of KADU

In the 1950s the constitution governing the colony underwent several reforms, largely in response to rising demands from African nationalist forces. In the election of 1961 Kenyans won the majority of seats in the legislative council. KANU won 19 seats against KADU’s 11, but refused to form a government due to prevailing restrictions against a number of leading African politicians, including Jomo Kenyatta. As a result, the British governor persuaded KADU to form a minority government in coalition with European and Asian members of the Legislative Council. This government, however, was tightly controlled and was not allowed to exercise effective political leadership (Andreassen 2003:135). Yet, the KADU administration managed to attain the adoption of a so-called Majimbo Constitution, a federal constitution with autonomous regions. The KANU delegation at the Lancaster House negotiations saw the introduction of Majimboism as yet another white settler strategy in the battle to

protect their property and privilege in a society that would soon be dominated by the African majority.

In May 1963, the scene was set for the introduction of self-government, through elections on a general roll. As in 1961, KANU won the greatest number of seats – this time with 42 against KADU’s 28. Contrary to 1961 however, KANU now formed a majority government with Jomo Kenyatta as the prime minister. Six months later, on the 12 December 1963, Kenya was granted full independence (Ibid 2003:137).

The majimbo/federal constitution in Kenya proved to be short lived. After KANU won the election in 1963, they changed the constitution within months and a unitary government structure was introduced. This was made possible through the exploitation of opposition leaders’ interest in a manipulative power game<sup>1</sup>, and these events ultimately led to the dissolution of KADU. Bates (1989:60-63) argues that the reasons why the transition to independence was so peaceful was the mixture of motives surrounding the land issue. The fact that politicians may have had political interests different from the economic interests of their constituencies was one element, and the fact that the institutional framework handling the land settlement programme enabled KANU to exploit conflicting motives and interests within the ethnic alliance that made up KADU, was another. In mid-1964 individual politicians started to defect to KANU, and KADU was finally dissolved in November 1964. The first member of the KADU leadership to defect was the president of the Rift Valley Assembly, Daniel arap Moi (Ibid).

### 2.2.2 The Kenyatta Era

According to Ochieng’ (1989:214-216) there have existed two types of politics in Kenya since the formation of the first nationalist party, the Kenya African Union (KAU) in 1944. One was based on ideological differences manifested in confrontations between advocates of a “capitalist” economy and those preferring a “socialist” model. At the time of independence this cleavage was reflected within

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on these events, see Bates (1989)

KANU as a division between radicals, with the Luo politician Oginga Odinga representing the socialist (liberal) side, and most of the rest of the party's leadership including Jomo Kenyatta representing the conservative side. The other type of politics is mainly concerned with which ethnic group is controlling the state. This politics of state control can be called "politics of tribalism" (Ibid:215). Ochieng claims that the proponents of the politics of tribalism were found within the conservative camps of KANU and KADU alike, which also preferred a capitalist market economy. Nevertheless, the image presented by Jomo Kenyatta did not reflect his position on these issues in the internal power struggles of KANU. On Independence Day, Kenyatta appeared before the Kenyan nation and announced that his government would build a democratic African State. The benefits of economic and social developments would be distributed equitably and differential treatment based on tribe, race, beliefs or class would be abandoned (Ochieng 1995:91-92). The institutions of police and army, the economic systems and the administration were preserved from the colonial state. The economy was oriented more in the direction of capitalism and foreign investments. Critics of Kenyatta declared that this began to look as though the old colonial power had simply transformed itself into one where Kenyatta was a new-style Governor and the Kikuyu had replaced the Europeans as the top dogs. His later rival Oginga Odinga claimed that in Kenya under Kenyatta there was "not yet *uhuru*" (freedom) (ibid:106).

The African politicians had been standing united together through independence, but already in 1963 the divisions between different factions inside KANU became visible. The radical forces within KANU still wanted social and economic development and they criticised Kenyatta for doing nothing to improve the conditions of neither the peasants nor the workers, and claimed that KANU's African socialism was only a blind to cover for capitalism and exploitation of ethnic divisions (Ochieng 1995:91-95).

One of the internal disagreements concerned the settlement schemes. Kenyatta heralded the settlement schemes as a huge success, seeing them as a symbol of Kenyan 'nation building' and stressing the fact that any Kenyan had the opportunity to move to

any part of the country to take advantage of the opportunities such schemes offered. From the perspective of the Kalenjin communities of the Rift Valley, the picture seemed less rosy. When the Million Acre Scheme had first been mooted some Kalenjin communities railed against the notion that they should be asked to pay to get back the land they claimed had originally belonged to them anyway (Anderson and Lochery 2008:10). Although the Luo were not much involved in the different settlement schemes, the radical camp of KANU with Odinga as a leading spokesman supported the Kalenjin claim from an ideological perspective. Campaigns were organised to boycott the auctions and allocation processes. In other areas Kalenjin who had wanted land but lost out in the initial allocations found themselves out-bid by Kikuyu, Kisii or Luhya buyers when plots were re-sold. Suspicions about the allocation procedures also became increasingly rife, with accusations that land were corruptly granted to politicians and civil servants.

By 1965 the Kikuyu-Luo alliance within KANU had failed, and the radical wing with Oginga Odinga in front, left KANU to form the Kenya Peoples Union (KPU) as a “socialist alternative”. These events did not influence Kenyatta significantly; he was instead bent on continuing the political line he had started. According to Ochieng (2005:97) he saw his political enemies as “paid agents of communists whose mission it was to dethrone him”. Addressing a Kenyatta day rally in Nairobi on 20 October 1967, he said:

As from today KPU are regarded as snakes in the grass. Let them re-examine their minds and return to KANU. If they do not do so, KPU should beware! The fighting for our uhuru is on. Whoever has ears to hear, let him heed this (Ibid:98).

Kenyatta used whatever means he could to stop the defections from KANU to KPU, and in the 1966 by-election he used instant land resettlement to undermine the appeal of KPU Kikuyu leaders (bribing KPU leaders of Kikuyu extraction by giving them land), thus leaving the electoral support for the KPU leader Odinga almost entirely to the Luo community. Three years later, in 1969, the prominent Luo leader Tom Mboya, a KANU minister and a politician many considered an aspiring successor of Kenyatta,

was assassinated. Kenyatta himself was sceptical to the young Mboya because he feared he could at some point turn against his own party. Based on these sentiments on the part of the President, there were rumours of Kenyatta having ordered the killing (Miller and Yeager 1994:46). Ethnic violence, allegedly instigated by Kikuyu leaders, erupted as an after-effect of the murder. Trying to deal with the accelerating ethnic strife and antagonism, Kenyatta relied increasingly on repressive politics, including the banning of the KPU.

From the time of these events until Kenyatta's death in 1978, KANU aimed at forging a loose alliance of several ethnic groups with the Kikuyu, but trying at the same time to isolate Odinga and his supporters, Luo as well as non-Luo. With a balancing act between punishment of opponents and rewards to followers, Kenyatta maintained political stability. The cohesion between different ethnic groups and classes in Kenya was the result of an effective system of patron-client relationships; in 1978 this system influenced ethnic groups in the most remote areas of Kenya (Miller and Yeager 1994:59). At the same time Kenyatta increasingly relied on the judiciary, the police and the Kikuyu-dominated army; Kenya became a one-man show. During the 1970s several radical politicians and academics were imprisoned for alleged criminal behaviour, and some were killed (Ochieng' 1995:102-103).

### 2.2.3 Daniel Toroitich arap Moi

Kenyatta remained in power until his death on 22 August 1978. Following his demise, the fight to become Kenyatta's successor turned into a power struggle marked by political, economic and ethnic interests. And even though Kenyatta's closest allies had put their money and hopes elsewhere, Vice President Daniel arap Moi came out of this power game as the country's next President.<sup>2</sup>

The theme of continuity marked the presidency of Daniel arap Moi, emphasized by the choice of Nyayo (footsteps) as the watchword of his administration. This was especially true when it came to economic policies. Economic interest groups and

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<sup>2</sup> For more information and background on this power struggle following the death of President Kenyatta, see Ochieng and Ogot 1995:187-191

classes that had been influential during the Kenyatta era kept their positions under Moi, and the government remained committed to a capitalist-oriented, mixed economy and economic policies that aimed at creating and sustaining a high rate of economic growth. Private property ownership was guaranteed and foreign investment was encouraged through legislative provision for the repatriation of profits. Moi was dependent on support from several ethnic groups and was in many ways forced to lead a similar policy to that of Kenyatta (Maxton and Ndege 1995:152).

When Moi assumed the presidency in 1978, he consolidated his power in two strategic moves. During his first four or five years in office, he gradually reduced the Kikuyu influence in the state and created room for his own loyal constituency, predominately groups from the previous KADU alliance; the so-called KAMATUSA (Kalenjin, Masai, Turkana and Sambura) communities. These communities became the bedrock of the regime (Waki report 2008:25). Over time, the support base was extended to include other KADU groups such as the Luhya and the Mijikenda of the Western and Coast Provinces, respectively. He de-Kikuyused the state, but tried to keep the support of the Kikuyu with mixed results. He could not use Kenyatta's confidantes; he had to create new co-operative relationships. Despite his rhetoric of national unity, Moi embarked upon a strategy of ethnic engineering even as he castigated any public reference to ethnicity as a "subversive tribalism". Open debate about ethnicity was restricted and regarded with suspicion, but ethnopolitics was widely practised (Andreassen 2003:245).

Intolerance of politicians who were in opposition to KANU had existed ever since the banning of Oginga Odinga's KPU party in 1969. Between 1969 and 1982 Kenya had remained a *de facto* one-party state. In May 1982, George Anyona (a radical politician and critic of KANU politics) was detained without trial and Oginga Odinga was put under house arrest when they tried to register an opposition party. After an attempted coup a constitutional amendment was rushed through parliament making KANU the only political party. Kenya was now a *de jure* one-party state. KANU continued to be divided not on ideological lines, as was the case between 1960 and 1970, but on the

basis of political factions where relationships and events were determined by groups thinking and personal advantage. Factions also entailed the existence of patron and client relationships (Ogot 1995: 202-203).

## 2.3 Political developments in the 1990s

In the 1990s, the quest for democracy had taken a whole new form. Change in international relations due to the end of the Cold War, and the democratisation of Eastern Europe added pressure for “democracy” in the whole of Africa. Intellectuals, the churches, lawyers and activists from within the non-government community (mainly the urban civil society) in Kenya seized upon the opportunity to put their claim for political pluralism in an international context.

### 2.3.1 From one-party state to multi-party state

In 1991, Kenyans followed with keen interest as several African states moved towards multipartyism. The pro-democracy movement was spearheaded by veteran politicians, priests, lawyers and academics. They expressed their opinion through new privately owned journals, newspapers and magazines as well as some well established newspapers such as *Daily Nation* and *Standard*. This new pro-democracy movement was not well received by Moi’s government, who claimed that multipartyism would generate ethnic tension and threaten political stability. From June 1990, the KANU government carried out a major offensive against pro-democracy activist, denouncing them as ‘traitors’, ‘tribalists’, ‘anarchists’, and ‘agents of foreign powers’. A licence to hold a public rally by the opponents was declined, but on the 7<sup>th</sup> of July 1990 thousands of Kenyans streamed into Uhuru Park in central Nairobi. The clash with the police left 28 people being killed and 1,400 arrested (Ogot 1995:240-241).

It was now evident that political pluralism had enormous support in Kenya, contrary to KANU propaganda. More and more people began to speak openly and defiantly against the regime. Gradually as pressure from different opposition groups increased, the KANU government was left with the alternatives of major confrontations with the pro-democracy movement or a controlled transfer to multi-party politics. The pressure

increased further when Oginga Odinga in February 1991 launched an opposition party, the National Democratic Party (NDP),<sup>3</sup> which was not granted formal recognition. The failure to register NDP only prompted the opposition to find new strategies, and in August 1991 a group of eight opposition figures formed the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (FORD) comprising of the major ethnic groups in Kenya, the Kikuyu, the Luo and the Luhya and some sections of the Kamba and Kisii communities, and supported by foreign donors (Ogot 1995:242, Andreassen 2003:158). In December 1991, the Moi government gave in to domestic and foreign pressure and repealed the one-party section 2a of the constitution, making Kenya a multi-party democracy again.

### 2.3.2 The elections of 1992 and 1997

The repeal of section 2a of the constitution created an entirely new situation for the KANU government, as there was now a chance of losing future elections. To secure future political power KANU carefully crafted a new strategy with five main components: (i) to encourage division in the opposition; (ii) to manipulate the rules and procedures of electoral competition; (iii) to manipulate electoral support in selected rural and cosmopolitan areas by means of ethno-political disturbances; (iv) to use the vast resources of the state in favour of the incumbent party, e.g printing money to finance the electoral campaign; and (v) electoral fraud. In all of these respects the incumbent government was successful (Tostensen et al. 1998:5).

Domestic and international observers cast serious doubts on the freedom and fairness of the 1992 election. The voter registration process was seriously flawed, because the state failed to issue the necessary number of ID cards to eligible voters. The nomination process was flawed and barred a number of candidates from presenting their nomination papers. Opposition candidates were bribed to withdraw from the election. At the same time, the opposition had gone from being a united movement to a number of different fractions of various ethnic and regional groups represented by different “strong men” wanting to become the new President. The situation thus soon turned to the disadvantage of the opposition. In February 1992, Mwai Kibaki, who had

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<sup>3</sup> The NDP is later known as Raila Odinga’s (the son of Oginga Odinga) party, he joined the NDP in 1994 after he left Ford-Kenya when he did not win the leadership of that party.

been Vice-President for KANU in 1978-88, registered a new party, the Democratic Party (DP) which had the potential of making serious inroads into the Kikuyu vote. There was also tension inside FORD and by August 1992 it split into two rival parties; FORD-Kenya, led by the Luo Oginga Odinga, and FORD-Asili, led by the Kikuyu Kenneth Matiba. The incumbent party took advantage of the situation claiming that they had been right all along that multi-party politics would inevitably divide the country along ethnic lines, and that only KANU was able to maintain a truly national profile and secure political stability (Tostensen et al. 1998:5-7).

The last part of KANU's strategy, to manipulate electoral support through ethno-political violence, became the most critical and with fatal consequences. People in certain areas were killed or chased out of their land by gangs of armed 'warriors'. As early as October 1991, a series of 'tribal clashes' erupted in Western Kenya, and up until the 1992 elections about 800 lives had been taken and tens of thousands of Kenyans had been internally displaced (Andreassen 2003:174). Independent observers and analysts concluded that the pattern of ethno-political violence was targeted at members of communities supporting the opposition (the Kikuyu and the Luo in particular), and that the pre-election clashes were an attempt to cleanse certain areas of opposition supporters. The post-election violence, on the other hand, represented 'punishment' of the same communities for not supporting KANU (Andreassen 2003:173-175).

The irregularities instigated by the government during the election strengthened the already uneven power relationship between the opposition and the incumbent and secured the re-election of KANU. Two of the most important electoral law reforms the regime introduced before the election were the 25-per-cent clause, requiring that a presidential candidate, to be duly elected, would have to garner 25 per cent support in five of the country's eight provinces, in addition to the plurality of the votes cast, and that the elected president had to choose its government entirely from its own party (Tostensen et. al 1998:6).

The run up to the 1997 elections was equally characterized by irregularities both when it came to the registration of voters, registration of candidates, opposition candidates' possibilities to run a campaign, and politically motivated pre-election violence (Tostensen et. al 1998:39-43). Although the pre-election period of 1997 saw less violence than in 1992, the violence that occurred was very similar to events in advance of the 1992 elections. The violence was designed to spread a culture of fear in areas with widespread multicultural composition, and it was in the interest of the incumbent regime. The pre-election violence in 1997 took many forms, from widespread unrest on the coast to ethnic clashes in the Kisii-Trans Mara border areas and isolated cases of intimidation in other areas. In the Coast Province the violence led to around 200 people killed, and in the country as a whole, thousands of families were again internally displaced (Andreassen 2003:198).

The most significant difference between the two elections was the increased democratic space resulting from the IPPG (Inter-Parties Parliamentary Group) package. The IPPG resulted from co-operation between the KANU government and the opposition, leading to minimal reforms such as improvement in the freedom of movement, assembly and expression. Nevertheless, in terms of cleavages in the political landscape of Kenya, the 1997 elections were similar to those of 1992. The distinct ethnic pattern was reproduced and reinforced, at the level of party make-up and voting. One great difference, however, with respect to the presidential contest was the fact that Kenya for the first time in its political history saw a woman candidate, indeed two. Charity Ngilu gathered nearly half a million votes, a good accomplishment by any standards in a male-dominated society (Tostensen et al. 1998:51).

Neither the 1992 nor the 1997 elections were fair. However, the overdue IPPG reform package no doubt made the electoral environment measurably fairer in 1997 compared to 1992. KANU did not show the same strength in 1997 and won only 113 seats in the parliament to the opposition's 109, meaning that KANU failed to secure enough seats to be able to amend the constitution. Thus, Moi and KANU were unable to change the

two-term limit on presidential re-election introduced through the political reforms in 1992 (Steeves 2006:200).

## 2.4 A New Democratic Era?

After two disputed elections in the 1990s, many saw the 2002 Kenya elections as a milestone for democracy in Africa, as opposition leader Mwai Kibaki defeated KANU's presidential candidate Uhuru Kenyatta, and both parties accepted the results. With this transition Kenya joined the ranks of African countries where power has changed hands through the conduct of peaceful, democratic, and multiparty elections. The run-up to the elections however, was characterised by an intense power struggle of ethnic coalition-building within the political parties.

### 2.4.1 Towards a new national alliance

The 1997 results showed that the opposition had the potential strength to win the elections if they managed to field one common candidate. The possibility to end the four-decade KANU rule was the driving force behind the conglomerate of shifting political alliances prior to the 2002 elections. The opposition faced the challenge of uniting behind one presidential candidate with sufficient support. This culminated in the formation of a broad opposition alliance in October 2002 (Songstad 2003:7).

In the run-up to the 2002 elections, Moi sought to craft a broader ethnic coalition for KANU. The merger between KANU and the National Development Party (NDP), led by Raila Odinga, came in April 2002 after the NDP had already been given four cabinet posts in Moi's government at the beginning of 2002. Odinga was now given the powerful post of Secretary-General in the 'New KANU'. The NDP had its primary support in the Luo-dominated part of Nyanza Province. Another major change was made at the same event, namely the introduction of four new vice-chair positions, each held by ethnic leaders – Musalia Mudavadi of the Luhya, Kalonzo Musyoka of the Kamba, Katana Ngala of the Mijikenda and Uhuru Kenyatta of the Kikuyu. The merger was expected to counter KANU's dwindling support and to increase the possibility to win the upcoming elections (Steeves 2006:200).

In May 2002, the Democratic Party (DP), FORD-Kenya and the National Party of Kenya (NPK), and 10 other minor parties and two pressure groups formed the National Alliance Party of Kenya (NAK). In September 2002, the NAK nominated Mwai Kibaki as the presidential candidate with Michael Wamalwa as his running mate. Kibaki had strong support among the Kikuyu and their close relations, the Meru and Embu communities. Wamalwa had strength among the Luhya and in addition the previously mentioned Charity Ngilu had support among the Kamba (Songstad 2003).

Uhuru Kenyatta, son of Kenya's first president, Jomo Kenyatta, was President Moi's favoured heir to the presidency. However, the opposition against Moi's choice grew within the new KANU and the opposing group became informally known as the Rainbow Alliance. The dissident group consisted of prominent politicians who all wanted to succeed Moi as the President of Kenya. The Rainbow Alliance remained within KANU until 14 October when KANU formally nominated Uhuru Kenyatta as the presidential candidate. The Rainbow Alliance then defected from KANU and took over the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), one of the many fringe parties in Kenyan politics (Songstad 2003).

Shortly after the defection from KANU, the LDP leaders met with NAK leaders to talk about a possible coalition. After intense negotiations, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was reached in which the two forces formed The National Rainbow Coalition (NARC). Mwai Kibaki who had been nominated the NAK presidential candidate became the NARC presidential candidate, but the MoU stated that the LDP and NAK would share equitably in the allocation of ministerial portfolios and other government and parastatal appointments (Steeves 2006:202). Michael Wamalwa retained the position as Kibaki's running mate. The four most central politicians in NARC were Mwai Kibaki, Michael Wamalwa, Charity Ngilu and Raila Odinga. These four commanded a total of per cent of the presidential vote in 1997.

KANU never had a chance against a united NARC which drew support from the whole country. The NARC campaign hammered home that KANU and Moi had driven the

country to ruin. NARC on the other hand would introduce free primary education, revitalize the economy, rebuild the decaying infrastructure, rejuvenate the agricultural sector, adopt zero tolerance to corruption, create 500,000 new jobs a year and deliver a new constitution for Kenya within 100 days of taking office. NARC's appeal of 'time for a change' swept KANU out of power and ended the country's 24-year period with Moi at the helm. NARC captured 125 parliamentary seats to KANU's 64. (Steeves 2006:202-203).

#### 2.4.2 New hope and prosperity

For the average Kenyan the results of the 2002 election generated hope for a new and better future. Kenyans stood together as a nation and expected a genuine break from the pre-2002 period in terms of policy change and style of politics. The Kibaki government faced an enormous task of rebuilding the faith and accountability in politics. As Steeves (2006:204) put it, "Kenyans now had the understanding of their new-found power that if the leadership faltered, they too could be turfed out the next time around". NARC had made a number of promises to the voters and Kenyans expected to see results.

The Kibaki government was able to make some major changes, most notably restoring the national economy onto a growth path and introducing free primary education. Nevertheless, it failed on one crucial element; the promise to introduce a new constitution within 100 days of forming a government. Additionally, the MoU signed between the LDP and NAK was violated from the very outset (Steeves 206:204).

#### 2.4 3 Constitutional affairs

According to the MoU there was to be equity in cabinet appointments, in the senior public service among permanent secretaries, ambassadors and in the heads of parastatals. However, Kibaki and his close circle allocated 9 ministers to LDP and 16 to NAK including the portfolios finance, justice and constitutional affairs, local government, national security and the head of civil service. At the same time, Kibaki sought advice and gave power to a close group of advisers called the 'Mt.Kenya Mafia' (Steeves 2006:205). The bitterness of the LDP ministers only grew with the

passing of time as the MoU was thoroughly undermined. The final straw for the NARC government came when the NAK fraction of the government rejected and changed the constitutional draft known as ‘the Bomas draft’ in 2005.

The design of the constitution had been a controversial issue since independence, as we have seen in section 2.1. The demand for constitutional change in the post-independence period began at the turn of the 1990s with the first call for a return to the multiparty system of government. The eventual introduction of the multiparty system of government in December 1991 was accompanied by the re-establishment of an electoral management body – the Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK) – appointed by the president (Chitere et. al 2006:2). The NAK ministers protested to the Bomas Draft provisions dealing with the presidency and decentralisation. The draft reduced the power of the presidency by converting the office into a more symbolic role as head of state and introduced a new powerful executive prime minister post. A new structure of decentralised government would be introduced as well, featuring regional governments with significant powers and finances. Kibaki and his ministers introduced a Consensus Bill which allowed parliament to amend the constitutional draft. A new draft, ‘the Wako draft’, was passed by Parliament. This draft restored the imperial presidency with the post of prime minister being reduced to government leader of the House, and the paragraphs on decentralisation was watered down to a level where only a minor form of district government was introduced (Chitere et.al 2006:11, 21).

In November 2005, the Wako Draft was the basis for the national referendum on the constitution. The Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK) supervised the referendum. The LDP ministers still remained in Kibaki’s cabinet, but during the run-up to the referendum the LDP fraction and the NAK fraction campaigned on two different sides. The ECK used fruit symbols of the two sides of the contest. The Banana became the symbol of the ‘Yes’ side which comprised a majority of cabinet ministers along with a sizable number of NAK-affiliated MPs. The Orange became the symbol of the ‘No’ side led by seven LDP ministers, LDP MPs, the opposition leader Uhuru Kenyatta, and KANU MPs alongside leading civil society organisations which wanted the ‘people-

driven', 'Wanjiku' constitution: the Bomas Draft (Steeves 2006:206). In the process of campaigning against the Wako Draft constitution, the Orange group became the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) fighting against a constitutional proposal that was seen to limit the democratic opening. On 21 November 2005, Kenyans rejected the Wako Draft with 58.1 per cent for the ODM 'No' side against 41.9 per cent for the Banana 'Yes' side. Kibaki dissolved the cabinet after the referendum defeat and on appointing a new cabinet, left out all the members of the LDP who had previously served in the government. The ODM registered as a political party in August 2006.

The failure of the NARC coalition to work together towards a better future for all Kenyans disappointed and frustrated the general population. The division within the political elites and the frustration among Kenyans laid the foundation for an intense election campaign towards the 2007 general elections.

## 2.5 The 2007 elections

The 2007 presidential election was without doubt the closest since the restoration of a multiparty system in December 1991. After the constitutional referendum in November 2005 a number of prominent political leaders saw themselves as future presidential candidates. The struggle to become the presidential candidate split the ODM into two different parties; ODM-Kenya with Kalonzo Musyoka as the candidate, and ODM which eventually selected Raila Odinga as the presidential candidate. The remains of the NARC coalition together with KANU (without its Secretary General William Ruto, who stayed in ODM) and twenty other big and small political parties formed a new Party of National Unity (PNU) in August 2007, with Kibaki as its presidential candidate.

### 2.5.1 The campaign

The election campaign period was marred by several violent incidents, but not to the extent experienced in 1992 or 1997. The worst pre-election violence in 2007 was in Western and Rift Valley Provinces. Longstanding land conflicts between neighbouring communities escalated as their leaders positioned themselves within the PNU or the

ODM, and youths were mobilised to intimidate voters (ICG 2008:3). The ODM represented the largest coalition and ten weeks before Election Day the ODM wave seemed unbeatable. Odinga held a 16 per cent lead in opinion polls, and the youth vote, one of the most important new factors, was expected to guarantee his victory.

The ODM campaigned on democratic change and promised to bring an ‘Orange revolution’ to Kenya, defending the poor and the weak against a government controlled by a clique of business people close to Kibaki. They attacked the Kibaki government and referred to three acts of betrayal: renegeing on the 2002 pre-election MoU on power sharing; subverting the Bomas draft of a new constitution, and the failure to act on its commitment to zero tolerance on corruption. A new constitutional order, devolution and equitable distribution of resources were presented as ODM’s alternative agenda. The PNU campaigned with the motto *Kazi idendelee* (let the work continue) to underline the continuity of progress if re-elected. It emphasised economic recovery – the steady 5-6 per cent growth rate during the second half of Kibaki’s presidency, which has allowed Kenya to fund free primary education and create constituency development funds (CDFs). Free secondary education was one of Kibaki main re-election promises (Andreassen et al. 2008:55-57).

Several factors probably contributed to the erosion of Odinga’s lead in the polls. The PNU aggressively attacked the ODM on its *majimbo* agenda accusing it of fomenting ethnic cleansing of migrant communities under the guise of *majimboism*. A related campaign was launched by the PNU against the MoU signed by the ODM and the Muslim leadership, alleging a secret deal to establish Sharia (Islamic) law in the Muslim-dominated areas. Also contributing to the reduction of Odinga’s lead were personal attacks against the ODM leadership, based on deeply rooted ethnic prejudice that cut across society. Nevertheless, as the campaign ended, the Steadman polling institute still gave Odinga a 2-percentage point lead in the presidential race (ICG 2008:5-6).

### 2.5.2 Results and Violence

All national and international observers reported that while the voting and counting of ballots at polling-station level was orderly and satisfactory with a few exceptions, the tallying and compiling of the results were manipulated, dramatically undermining the credibility of the results announced by ECK chair Kivuitu on 30 December 2007 (ICG 2008:6). Immediately after the ECK announcement, riots broke out across the country, mainly in the larger cities of Nairobi, Kisumu, Eldoret and Mombasa. The ferocity and speed of the violence caught many by surprise. Hundreds were killed in less than 24 hours. Houses and shops were set ablaze. Thousands began fleeing. By the second day, Kenya appeared to be on the brink of civil war. According to humanitarian agencies and figures revealed by the Kenyan authorities, by the end of February 2008 at least 1,200 people had been killed. Estimates of the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) varied between 350,000 and 600,000 (Andreassen et al. 2008:5).

The violence came to an end with the power-sharing agreement between the PNU and the ODM brokered by the chief negotiator Kofi Annan and the mediation team of Eminent African Persons on 28 February 2008. The government of national unity is supposed to govern the country until the next general elections in 2012.

## Chapter 3 – Theoretical Framework

My assumption is that Kenyans vote ethnically mainly because they believe it will promote their economic interests, and that ethnicity acts as an intermediate variable or an epiphenomenon that in many cases serves as a means to an end. Political science theory offers various explanations of voter behaviour. Electoral behaviour has been thoroughly studied by European scholars. It may be useful to look at the different explanatory models used by these scholars to see if any of them can be transferred to African societies in general and to Kenya in particular. The first group of theories presented are theories of electoral behaviour.

The second group of theories are theories of ethnicity, as political science theory attributes much weight to ethnicity when dealing with African elections, highlighting it as one of the main explanatory models. The traditional divide in debates on ethnicity is between those who see ethnicity as fundamentally a psychological trait and ethnic conflict as a result of ancient hatreds between groups (primordialists), on the one, and those who regard it as a powerful political instrument in the hands of political elites (instrumentalists), on the other. Both of these are challenged, however, by others who regard ethnic identity as but one of several identities, highlighting the need to analyse the interplay between ethnicity, institutions and politics, and the reasons why ethnicity becomes relevant in specific historical situations.

I go on to discuss the role of political institutions and political entrepreneurs in politicising ethnic identity. Historical struggles that transform cultural identity into political identity always require political entrepreneurs, individual leaders, and elites to interpret discrimination or privilege in ways that make cultural identity politically relevant to their targeted constituencies.

The last section of this chapter sums up the previous sections and connects ethnic affiliation with the other political motivations underlying electoral behaviour.

### 3.1 Voter behaviour

The tradition originating from Rokkan and Lipset's book "*Party systems and Voter alignments*" from 1967 has been the most influential one in European research on electoral choice. Their theoretical approach and the cleavage structure they suggest is still relevant to understanding and explaining electoral behaviour. Even though almost all literature that deals with electoral behaviour has originated from the electoral setting in Europe or the United States, elements of the same explanatory models can be utilised when explaining or seeking to explain African electoral behaviour.

An individual voter's decision to choose one alternative over another in an election may of course have a range of different rationales and explanations. I will in this section go through some of them.

#### 3.1.1 Social structure

Thomassen (2005) goes through the most prominent approaches to explaining electoral behaviour in Europe. The first one is focused on *social structure* and originates from Lipset and Rokkan. This political-sociological approach is based on the idea that electoral choices are based on a limited number of social cleavages. The most important dimensions are *social class* (owner vs. worker), *religion* (state vs. church) and *ethnicity*. The argument is that if you belong to a certain segment of society and there is a political party present who represents that particular segment, you would vote for that party (Thomassen 2005:10). A central point in the social cleavage model is that the party system is not a mere reflection of the cleavage structure. The alignment process could take different routes depending on the institutional context at certain points in the democratisation process, and the parties once founded were actors seeking survival with an interest in keeping the alignments to the voters (Oskarson 2005:85). The connection between people's social position and party choice is not a coincidence, but tends to be more or less institutionalised in the party systems. The social cleavages of a society are in most cases reflected in the origin of the party system.

### 3.1.2 Long-term predispositions

A more or less stable system of relations between political party and voter is not necessarily based upon the social position of the latter. *Party identification* has the function of ensuring people's lasting attachment to a political party. Party identification is a "long-term, affective, psychological identification with one's preferred political party" (Thomassen 2005:11). It has been recognised that the strength of partisanship is an important predictor of people's political attitudes and behaviour. Partisan ties help orient the individual through the complexities of politics and mobilise individuals to participate in parties, elections, and the processes of representative government. Party identification has been much more powerful in Europe than in the United States. In European parliamentary systems, political parties and not individual politicians are the principal actors linking voters to governmental institutions. Policies leave little leeway for individual candidates to run their own campaigns for office and offer few incentives for voters to deviate from their party preference in favour of individual candidates from another party (Berglund et al. 2005:106). This is quite different from US and African politics where policy formulations to a large degree depend on individual candidates, and where the characteristic of the candidate has considerable significance in addition to party background. I therefore expect to find party identification to be less important in Kenyan elections.

A similar argument is made regarding *values*. The cleavage model suggests that people's electoral choices are determined by group membership irrespective of their value orientations. However, such an interpretation is missing the point. A cleavage implies some set of values common to the members of the group. An individual will not vote for a party out of 'objective' group interests without sharing the values of the party representing the group. When an individual casts a vote, political values are prescriptive beliefs which individuals would like to see implemented in the political system. Political values thus influence the participation by which individuals seek to influence politics (Knutsen and Kumlin 2005:125). The argument made in European electoral theory is that even when social cleavages lose political significance, the value

orientation that historically was part of this social cleavage might not lose its significance. In other words, the independent impact of value orientation will increase. For instance, even though the class cleavage might lose importance, the value of “equitable distribution of income” might still be of great importance. This means that voters will tend to vote for political parties that holds the same principal values as themselves.

We further have the *ideological denomination* of parties and voters. The ideological approach is based on the assumption that people’s political preference is connected to the left-right dimension, originating from French politics where the radicals sat on the left side of the president, and the conservatives on the right side (Thomassen 2005:15). The left-right continuum can also be described as a cleavage between socialists and capitalists over a political spectrum dominated by the emphasis on power analysis and economic interests. A rational voter would, according to the fundamental argument in the ideological approach to electoral behaviour vote for the party located at the shortest distance from the voter’s own location on the left-right continuum. The ideological argument is inherently different from the argument of party identification. The vocabulary of left and right emphasises a cognitive-based instrumental mode of electoral behaviour, whereas party identification stresses the affective dimension and identification with political parties rather than instrumentality (Cees van der Eijk et al. 2005:167). Left-right orientations of citizens are customarily found to be one of the most important factors that determine European voters’ choice at the ballot box. During the fight for independence, when African political systems were being shaped, the division between capitalism and socialism was at the centre of events. This was also the case in Kenya (as explained in chapter 2). Even though the Kenyan party structure has gone through various transformations since then, there are reasons to explore the contemporary impact of the left-right orientations in Kenyan electoral behaviour.

Another long-standing predisposition of electoral behaviour is found in clientelism. In a society built on political *clientelistic* networks voters would vote for the preferred

party of their patrons in exchange for social or economic gains. Lemarchand (1972:69) characterise political clientelism as “a more or less personalised relationship between actors (i.e., patrons and clients), or a set of actors, commanding unequal wealth, status or influence, based on conditional loyalties and involving mutually beneficial transactions.” A patron-client relationship may for instance exist between the elder in a clan and the rest of the clan or directly between the constituency’s MP (Member of Parliament) and the citizens of that constituency. The purpose of a clientelistic network is thus the exchange of resources and ensuring a particular distribution pattern. Many African societies have been characterised as clientelistic, Kenya among them. Keefer (2007) argues that clientelist politics is most attractive in conditions of low productivity, high inequality, and starkly hierarchical social relations, mainly in young democracies. Under these conditions, regular citizens have a hard time believing the different political parties and leaders because they do not see any change in their living conditions, no matter who governs the country. One strategy that political parties and leaders tend to use in these societies is to rely on patrons, whose clients trust them but not the candidates. By relying on patrons, candidates do not have to invest their own resources in building credibility. *Candidates create new patron-client relationships with a certain number of elders who in exchange for large economic and social favours, will ensure that a great number of voters actually vote for this particular candidate* (Keefer 2007:806). In societies where clientelistic networks are prevalent voters will therefore choose the favoured political party of their patron in return for economic or social gains.

### 3.1.3 Short-term factors

In Europe there has been a shift away from the style of electoral decision-making based on social group and/or party cues towards a more individualised and inwardly oriented style of political choice. **Issue voting** can be described simply and clear-cut: voters are basing their choice on particular issues that are salient at the election in question. But issue voting is often more complex, and Borre (2001:13) defines issue voting as comprising of the following three elements: (i) Issues concerning the goal of politics (‘values’); (ii) Issues as discussions about what should be on the top of the

agenda (Issue salience); and (iii) Issue performance in terms of the voters' perceptions of competence and credibility among parties and candidates. In theory there is a clear difference between *values* and *issues*. Political values may be defined as 'prescriptive beliefs about which goals [one] would like to see implemented in the political system and about desired participatory forms to influence politics', whereas political issues are often more narrowly defined – capturing particular policy proposals or political circumstances (Aardal and Wijnen 2005:195). In practice, however, it may be difficult to distinguish clearly between issues and values. Nevertheless, all issues are not of the same kind. There are issues that divide the public into proponents and opponents, and issues regarding which the public tends to agree on the ends, but not on the means necessary to reach that end. Examples of issues are “unemployment” or “inflation”. Citizens tend to vote for the parties that are perceived as competent to handle salient issues.

***Retrospective voting*** presupposes that voters are measuring past performance and future prospects relative to their self-interest. Retrospective evaluations can be important along many types of issues where governments have responsibility for policy outcomes. However, among issue domains, economics is by far the dominant dimension for the study of retrospective voting (Listhaug 2005:213). Retrospective voting theory puts stronger emphasis on the individual citizen as actor, often independently of parties and other collective structures and bonds of loyalty. A key question in this research is, however, to what extent voters base their vote on their personal economic situation (egocentric voting) and to what extent they base their vote on the performance of the national or regional economy (sosiotropic voting)?

It is asserted that if a voter is uncertain of what her political preferences are and undetermined regarding what the vital issues are for her, then she will focus her attention on ***leaders***. Television has become a principal medium in an election campaign, and radio still reaches the masses effectively in many developing countries. The personality of the leader and the goal of projecting a positive image of the leader have therefore become highly relevant for the way parties wage their election

campaigns. At the same time, party leaders have acquired greater control over the message their party attempts to sell. Party leaders, one could claim, have become the most accessible and prominent feature of election campaigns (Curtice and Holmberg 2005:236). It can therefore be argued that in a complex world, where citizens have a hard time seeing the benefits of the policies the different parties espouse, it is rational to decide to vote for the overall trustworthiness and competence of the party leader, rather than the detailed promises made by the different parties at election time.

As mentioned above, in young democracies under conditions of low productivity, high inequality, and starkly hierarchical social relations, regular citizens have a hard time believing the different political parties and leaders because they do not see any change in their living conditions, no matter who governs the country. Keefer (2007:806) claims that candidates with severe credibility problems have recourse to two possible strategies to make credible promises to at least some voters. One is, as stated earlier, to rely on patrons, whose clients trust them but not the candidates. Another strategy in this respect is to invest resources to build up their credibility among voters directly by *vote-buying*. The practice of vote-buying occurs in many societies and organisations, and in different forms. Obvious examples include direct payments to voters, the buying of voting cards and the promise of specific programmes or payments to voters conditional on the election of a candidate (Dekel et al. 2008:2). In societies where it is possible to buy an individual's voting card, this would have a real effect on the outcome of the election. In societies where you can bribe the individual voter, but not being able to monitor what happened in the polling booth it might not have the same effect, but vote-buying can still have an effect on the electoral choice of the individual. If an individual does not have a clear opinion of whom to vote for, money might be a decisive factor.

The theories on voting behaviour range from social cleavages to long-term predispositions and short-term factors. All these theoretical approaches might be helpful in addressing and explaining voter behaviour in Kenya. However, in attempting to describe and explain social and political mechanisms, political crisis,

violence, armed conflict and elections in Africa, political science theory gives much weight and emphasis to the importance of ethnicity, highlighting it as one of the main explanatory variables. This emphasis is echoed by the coverage of African elections in western and international media, where ethnic voting is a much repeated phrase. Examining the importance of ethnicity and reviewing how it relates to the above cited theories could therefore be decisive for the task at hand. It is therefore necessary to go through some of the main theories of ethnicity.

### 3.2 Theories of ethnicity

The word “ethnic” is derived from the Greek *ethnos* (which in turn derived from the word *ethnikos*), which originally meant heathen or pagan (Hylland Eriksen 1993:5). It was used in this sense in English from the mid-14th century until the mid-19th century, when it gradually began to refer to "racial" characteristics. None of the founding fathers of sociology, political science and social anthropology – with the partial exception of Max Weber – accorded ethnicity much attention.

Since the 1960s, however, ethnic groups and ethnicity have become household words in social anthropology and political science. Nothing close to a consensus has emerged, however, about the effects of ethnicity; let alone what it is in the first place. For some, ethnicity is an emotion-laden sense of belonging or attachment to a particular kind of group (Horowitz, 1985; Shils, 1957). Others see ethnicity as a social construct or a choice to be made (Barth, 1969). Some even call ethnicity a biological survival instinct based on nepotism (Van den Berghe, 1981). A few consider it a mix of these different notions (Fearon & Laitin, 2000). All approaches agree, however, that ethnicity refers to aspects of relationships between groups which consider themselves, and are regarded by others, as being culturally distinctive. When approaching the politicisation of ethnicity and its relevance in a voting scenario, theorists tend to take the discussion on the divergence between the *primordialist* and *instrumentalist* perspectives as their point of departure. I will follow in their footsteps and start with this dichotomy.

### 3.2.1 Primordialism and instrumentalism

Arguments on how ethnicity emerges and becomes politicised can be placed along a continuum between a *primordialist* and an *instrumentalist* perspective. This dichotomy goes back to the 1950s and 1960s. While primordialism grew out of studies of the “new states” in Africa and Asia and was part of the modernisation school, instrumentalism can be traced back to the Manchester school of anthropology that studied ethnicity of urban African communities in the 1950s (Andreassen 2003:81-82).

According to the primordialist view, social organisation and politics are deeply influenced by *primordial* attachments such as blood, language, religion, and tradition. These attachments are so fundamental that political institutions that ignore them will meet difficulties. This was the case, for instance, with the newly independent states after decolonisation (ibid:81). Eller and Coughland (1993 quoted in Andreassen 2003:81) name three assumptions of a primordialist perspective:

- Primordial identities are given, they exist *a priori*. They are natural and ‘spiritual’ rather than sociological, they have long histories, and all interaction is carried out within primordial ties;
- Primordial sentiments are ineffable. Members of ethnic groups feel group attachment as natural and necessary, and they are compelled and overpowered to feel this attachment;
- Primordialism is fundamentally a question of emotion and affect.

Opposed to primordialism is instrumentalism, where ethnicity is seen as an instrument used for political or material purposes. In this perspective, people mobilise to compete for resources or in other ways fight for their interests, and ethnicity might be used as a tool for mobilisation. Political elites, for example, may find it useful to encourage or even to create ethnic affiliations in order to garner political support. In other words, ethnic identity is a dynamic phenomenon, which can change in tandem with political change. Far from the primordialist perceptions of ethnicity as givens, instrumentalists see ethnicity as a political phenomenon responding to a large extent to changes in social and political circumstances.

Primordialists and instrumentalists share, however, the understanding of ethnicity as a major independent force in politics. The difference lies in how they view the origins of ethnicity and the ways in which they assume ethnicity influences politics.

### 3.2.2 Ethnopolitics

In his book *Ethnopolitics* (1981), Joseph Rothschild summarises the insights of the substantial amount of literature published on ethnicity in politics, mostly by the end of the 1970s. This literature focused on ethnicity as a “modern political phenomenon” concerned with interethnic relations and the role of political entrepreneurs in arousing ethnic sentiments.

Joseph Rothschild sees ethnicity as a “plastic, variegated, and originally ascriptive trait that, in certain historical and socio-economic circumstances, is readily politicised” (Rothschild 1981:1). In modern and modernising societies he finds that such fertile circumstances for the politicisation of ethnicity abound. This is so because these societies have structured interethnic inequalities as well as entrepreneurs who have an interest in mobilising ethnicity into political leverage to alter or reinforce these structured inequalities. As a consequence, “in modern and transitional societies – unlike traditional ones – politicised ethnicity has become the crucial principle of political legitimisation and delegitimation of systems, states, regimes, and governments” (ibid:2).

Rothschild suggests a theoretical structure where ethnic politics is determined by: a) inequities in the distribution of resources to different ethnic groups; and b) the ethnic groups’ uneven access to the state. This model assumes a conscious choice of identity among the people as well as agency among political leaders (traditional and modern). Leading from this, he offers a definition of the politicisation of ethnicity: to politicise ethnicity is to “render people cognitively aware of the relevance of politics to the health of their ethnic cultural values, and vice versa; ... to stimulate their concern about this nexus ... to mobilise them into self-conscious ethnic groups ... and ... to

direct their behaviour toward activity in the political arena on the basis of this awareness, concern, and group consciousness” (Rothschild 1981:6).

Rothschild describes how political entrepreneurs awaken ethnic sentiments and thus make politics become ethnicised. If a society is structured in a way in which differences in economic well-being or class (access to land and state resources) correlate with ethnicity, ethnicity becomes a strong mobilisation tool.

### 3.3 Political entrepreneurs in weak institutions

When deciding how to vote, in any given situation, the individual will have a given number of parties and candidates to choose from. The party system and list of candidates have been developed, shaped and institutionalised over time. It is therefore important to understand how the electoral system is operating and what flora of parties there is to choose from in order to comprehend how individuals think when deciding how to vote. The existing system is the context within which the individual is compelled to operate. When explaining why ethnicity and ethnic tension have become predominant factors in electoral behaviour in a certain country or electoral entity, it must be done through reviewing its relevant economic, political, and institutional context.

Beverly Crawford (1998) suggests that the key to explaining cultural and ethnic tension and cooperation lies in political institutions, which can create incentives for cooperation and competition. Prevalence of cultural tension is higher where culture has been historically politicised. Institutions in modern states, however, often play a crucial role in cementing, creating, or attenuating cultural or identity politics that have been created in historical power struggles.

*Politicisation of cultural identity:* Social interests and divisions can be defined in many different ways, of which ethnic division is one. But although different divisions exist, not all of them become politically relevant. If ethnic divisions are important in

elections, they first have to be politicised; cultural identities must be transformed into political identities. Political institutions can either legitimate or attenuate politicised cultural identities. In Latin America, it was class rather than ethnicity that became a politically relevant division, whereas in Africa ethnicity has more typically become politicised. So, how and why do cultural or ethnic divisions become politically relevant? One example can be found in colonial policies where colonial powers used divide-and-rule tactics along ethnic lines. These policies created the opportunity for political entrepreneurs among colonised groups to draw on cultural identities to mobilise resistance to imperial control, gain access to political power and territory, and exercise power in the construction of new national institutions when colonial power collapsed. In both apartheid South Africa and in the period of slavery and the Jim Crow laws in the United States race was politicised by internal political elites in ways that led to similar historical struggles (Crawford 1998:18).

Such historical struggles that transformed cultural identity into political identity always required political entrepreneurs, individual leaders, and elites to interpret discrimination or privilege in ways that made cultural identity politically relevant to their targeted constituencies. It was, however, the institutions of the central state that determined whether or not politicised cultural identity would be cemented in social and political practice and whether culturally defined groups would seek autonomy, separatism, or the right to participate with others in the political arena (ibid.:20). The legal regulations for the government can either strengthen or weaken the politicisation of ethnicity, depending on the importance it gives to ethnic division as compared to other divisions. States that privilege one or several ethnic groups over others in terms of political participation or resource distribution, for example, legitimate politicised ethnic divisions and may intensify them or even create political groups based on identity. Conversely, states that base their rules of participation and resource allocation on other criteria than ethnic division weaken the political relevance of ethnic differences (ibid.:24).

*Institutional change, political entrepreneurs, and bandwagoning*: In societies where ethnicity is politicised, political legitimacy is low, resources are scarce or institutions are put under pressure or weakened, political entrepreneurs may emerge with both the incentive and the opportunity to exploit ethnic cleavages and perceived inequalities in an effort to mobilise popular support. Leaders may be tempted to privilege particular ethnic groups, because patronage networks of resource distribution have few transaction costs. A feeling of relative or permanent exclusion from development resources – a perception of unjustified group differences – may lead to a collective perception in an ethnic community for the need to organise politically in the pursuit of their anticipated future benefits (Andreassen 2003:91). This may succeed if political institutions encourage identity politics and if prohibitions against the practice of extreme identity politics are weak. As entrepreneurs start to practice identity politics the cost decreases for others to join. As support for these policies becomes widespread, the costs of not joining may increase. Likewise, identity policies spread from one ethnic group to others when leaders and members of groups see another group mobilising behind ethnic slogans. Ethnicity policies are thus created as a defensive strategy, and further accentuate tensions. These processes, which can be termed “bandwagon effects”, may escalate ethnic tensions and provoke violence, especially in times of an election (Crawford 1998:25).

### 3.4 Voting behaviour in an ethnicised society

In societies where ethnic identity has been politicised, and where political entrepreneurs and elites consequently refer to and present discrimination and privilege in ways that reinforce ethnic identities as something politically relevant, the party system will be greatly influenced by this ethnicisation of politics and structured accordingly. If this is indeed the case, the different parties or political leaders will as a result also represent different ethnic groups or different constellations of ethnic groups.

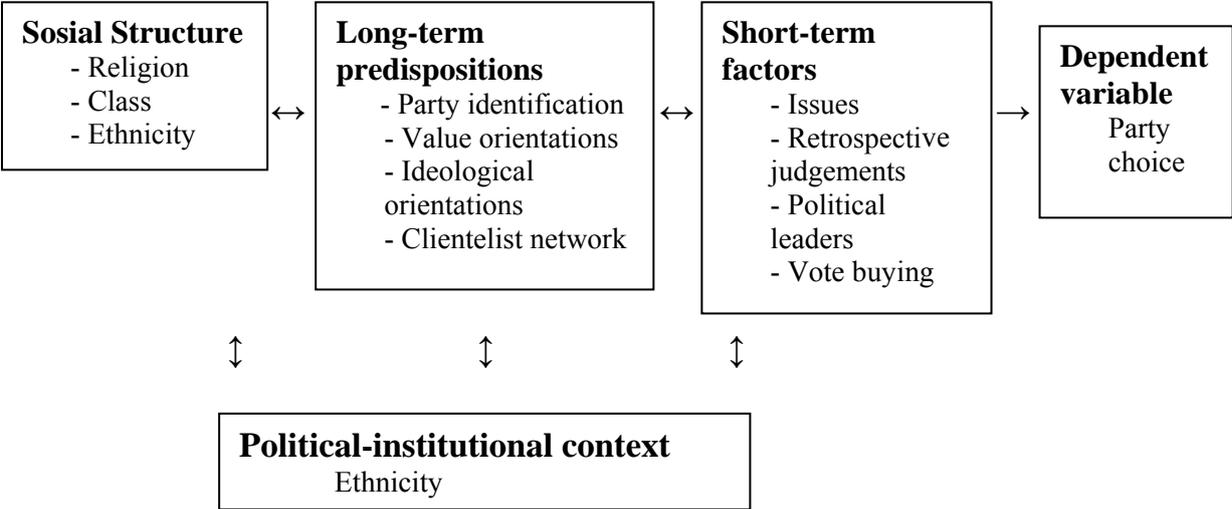
However, other significant divisions between these parties could also exist, based on central political issues, core values or ideological orientations. And even though voters

might put decisive emphasis on these other aspects of a party or politicians' policies and practices, they will still be confined to making their choice and casting their vote among the ethnically defined parties that exist. The end result is that the observer who aims at understanding and analysing electoral behaviour within such a political context will have problems identifying which of several competing causes give rise to what she observes. Voters will be perceived to be giving their votes to their ethnic kin or ethnically representative political party, but could according to themselves be making issue-based choices or choices based on ideological preferences.

The different commonly assumed rationales for an individual to vote for one party instead of another, as presented in section 3.1, must therefore be reviewed against the contextual backdrop of the ethnicised society. Voting behaviour related to social structure, long-term predispositions and short-term factors must be interpreted in a political-institutional context where ethnicity is a predominant factor.

**Model**

The model below is a visualization of the most important elements in the analysis and how they relate to each other. The figure should not be interpreted as a causal model. Rather, the arrows in the model signal that we want to discuss how one element influences the other.



Voting behaviour related to social structure, long-term predispositions and short-term factors must be interpreted in a political-institutional context where ethnicity is a predominant factor. I will analyse the different rationales in chapter five when examining the example of Kenya, and try to differentiate between identity or ethnic ties as reasons for voting behaviour and the different rationales put forward by distinctive electoral choice theories.

## **Chapter 4 – Methodological Approach:**

### **A Qualitative Case Study**

The study is conducted as a qualitative case study. A case study is defined by Yin (1994:13) as “an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident”. The question of boundaries is crucial. Chabal and Daloz (1999:148) argue that in African politics there is a constant and dynamic interpretation of different spheres of human experience. All aspects of life appear to affect, immediately and decisively, all others. In other words, all variables are dependent. “It is hardly possible, for example, to study voting patterns in national elections as we would in western societies” (Chabal and Daloz 1999:148). Yin continues by saying that case studies are preferable when you ask typical “how” and “why” questions. A case study is also fertile when you seek a deeper understanding of the phenomenon you are researching (Andersen 1997).

The contemporary phenomenon under study here is the electoral behaviour in Kenya. But instead of looking at how people vote statistically, this research is about the reasons why Kenyans vote the way they do. There are a lot of contextual factors that need to be taken into consideration when considering electoral behaviour. It is impossible to measure or uncover these factors by quantitative analysis, experiment or other methods; a case study is thus fruitful. A case study is recognised by the use of a variety of techniques for collecting information. I choose an approach that is mainly qualitative with primary emphasis of semi-structured interviews. The advantage of the qualitative approach is that it gives you broad, detailed and complex information of the subject you are interested in. The purpose of the study is to *explain* electoral behaviour. The case study is suitable for this purpose because it makes it possible to draw on a wide variety of evidence (documents, interviews, and observation) (Yin 1994:8) as well as to consider a wide range of variables (ibid:13) which is necessary to grasp a complex phenomenon.

## 4.1 Selection of case: Kenya

My interest in Kenya developed when I was living and working for a regional NGO called BEACON (Building Eastern Africa Community Network) in 2005/06. During my stay in Kenya at that time, the country went through a campaign to change the constitution, resulting in a referendum on the matter on 15 November 2005. The campaign and the aftermath of the referendum sparked my interest in the political situation of Kenya.

If we look at the post-independent political history of Kenya, there are some contentious issues that have remained unresolved since independence. The two most controversial issues are distribution of land and the design of the constitution which by many are seen as reflecting historical injustices. These issues have through history been the cause of several disputes and conflicts, most lately during the post-election violence in 2008. Election campaigns in Kenya have often been waged using ethno-political sentiments as a driving force, and thus, the conflict over the distribution of land and the making of the constitution become ethnic issues.

Ethnicity is often seen as the overriding factor in Kenyan politics, and there is no denying that ethnic affiliation and loyalty play a significant role in determining electoral choice, but ethnicity can also be seen as an epiphenomenon. (Tostensen 2008:8). There are material foundations of ethnic thinking that are often not brought to the fore. The historical injustices are perhaps the most important ones. The dynamic and blurred boundaries between ethnic affiliation, material well-being and historical injustices when it comes to choice of political party and president is not properly researched, and is largely missing in the literature about ethnicity and ethno-politics in Kenya. The purpose of my research is to explore this dynamic.

## 4.2 Fieldwork in Korogocho and Uasin Gishu

The fieldwork was conducted from 22 August until 3 October 2008 in Nairobi and in the Rift Valley. Or more precisely in the Korogocho slum in Kasarani district in

Nairobi, and in Uasin Gishu district, which is the same as Eldoret municipality, in the Rift Valley. It provided access to written information, allowed me to conduct interviews, as well as to follow political events and debate over a period of time, thus giving me an understanding of the nature of the political situation that would not have been possible without a stay of this duration. Because of the time constraints, the fieldwork was limited to two cases: Korogocho and Uasin Gishu. The two cases represent one urban and one rural community. Both areas have a diverse ethnic composition, and were affected by the post election violence.

However, this geographical limitation gives the study a certain bias: while I had good access to people living in an ethnically mixed environment, I did not have the same opportunity to talk to people living in areas with one predominant ethnic group. Balancing this, I've extensively had conversations and interactions with people from such places during my time in Nairobi, both during my fieldwork and during the period I was living there. I was also able to visit large parts of the country and have interactions with communities in several such ethnically homogenous areas as part of my work in Kenya in 2005/06.

The one year I was living and working in Kenya in 2005/06 hence served as a backdrop to my understanding of the political and social situation in Kenya. The basic knowledge of the country that I acquired made it easier to carry out fieldwork in a relatively short period, and made my encounters with the Kenyan people more fruitful.

I chose the areas for my field work based on various criteria. 56 % of Kenya's population are defined as poor (UNDP report 2006). Thus the average, regular Kenyan is poor. My target group is regular Kenyans. The majority of these regular Kenyans are peasants living in rural areas, but an increasing percentage of the poor are urban poor living in slums or informal settlements. On that background I chose one urban and one rural community. Since ethnicity is vital in my research, another selection criterion was ethnic diversity. Additionally, the land issue is vital in Kenyan politics. In Uasin Gishu district conflicts linked to ethnicity and land has been manifest several times;

both in 1992, 1997 and during the post-election violence in 2008 the district was affected extensively. Since I only had the possibility to stay in Kenya for six weeks, a final criterion was feasibility. Contacts I had from the time I was living in Kenya made the access to Korogocho possible. I further made arrangements in Uasin Gishu through the network of NCA Kenya (Norwegian Church Aid - Kenya) and its partner ACK (Anglican Church of Kenya).

#### 4.2.1 Korogocho

Korogocho is a slum in Nairobi that houses some 120,000 dwellers crammed within one single square kilometre. It is made up of 7 villages called: Highridge, Grogan, Ngomongo, Ngunyumu, Githaturu, Kisumu Ndogo/Nyayo and Korogocho. It is one of more than 200 slums in Nairobi, covering altogether a mere 5% of the city's territory. The population in the slums is estimated at 2.5 millions, out of a total of 4 million Nairobians. Korogocho ranks fourth in population size after Kibera, Mathare and Mukuru Kwa Jenga. It is an illegal settlement born in the early seventies. Most of the land is state property. The slum is multi-ethnic, counting some 30 ethnic groups; Kikuyu, Luo and Luhya are the major ones. The socio-economic reality is extreme poverty; there are no public services and the absence of the state is keenly felt ([www.korogocho.org](http://www.korogocho.org)).

#### 4.2.2 Uasin Gishu

Uasin Gishu District is one of the seventy-one districts of Kenya, located in the Rift Valley Province. The city of Eldoret is its capital, administrative centre and commercial centre. There has been a large population of white immigrants from England, Scotland, South Africa and Zimbabwe, who have come to settle and farm at different historical periods. At the beginning of the colonial era, the area was occupied by the Nandi sub-tribe of the Kalenjin, before that by the Maasai and before that the Sirikwa. Between 1960 and 1980 settlement schemes introduced by the Kenyan state emerged in several phases in Uasin Gishu District. The settlers were a mixture of Kalenjin, Kikuyu and some Luhya landless, and a few wealthier purchasers, often with larger holdings, who were expected to serve as an examples of 'best farming practice' to their less experienced and under-capitalised neighbours. By the late 1980s, Uasin

Gishu had around 30 schemes, with more than 7,500 plots, covering approximately 16% of the district's rural land area, and providing homes for around 60,500 people (Anderson and Lochery 2008:9). The province is multi-ethnic, with Kalenjins and Kikuyus making up the majority of the inhabitants. The province was hit hard by the post-election violence after the 2007 general elections.

The short time (nine months) between the post-election violence and my fieldwork means that people remembered the recent events very well. The post-election violence has made Kenyans more aware of the tense political situation, and many have reflected on their voting behaviour in relation to these events. This, however, might have made people more careful when speaking about ethnicity. We must be aware that people that have been a part of the post-election violence will be influenced by their position in the recent conflict and that the informants will be coloured by their experiences.

Although the country was generally calm during the period of my stay, the underlying conflict issues were far from finding any solution, and the political situation remained tense. The fieldwork thus gave me an opportunity to look closely into a continuing conflict which embodies the issues that explain the larger part of the electoral behaviour in Kenya.

#### 4.2.3 Data Collection

The data collected during my fieldwork consist of interviews as well as primary and secondary sources such as maps and settlements patterns, newspaper articles, books, and academic articles. There was also an element of direct observation, especially connected to the homes and the neighbourhood where I conducted the interviews in Korogocho, and to some extent in the IDP camps and homes I visited in Uasin Gishu. In Uasin Gishu I was able to observe how peoples' lives were affected by the crisis and the strategies they used to survive. My friend and assistant in Korogocho made me hang around in Korogocho also when I was not conducting interviews. In doing that I was able to listen to and observe people's reactions to everyday events and discussions about the political situation. My presence as a foreigner and a student naturally

influenced these situations to a certain extent, but the people I stayed with got used to my presence and did not change their behaviour significantly, as far as I could judge. Language barriers posed a problem to direct observation. Although the youths in Korogocho to a certain degree speak English, most of their chat goes on in Kiswahili or Cheng; a mixture of the two. Although I was mostly able to pick up pieces of the discussion that made it understandable, thoroughly following a discussion when people speak Cheng is difficult.

*Primary sources* consist of official documentation and maps of settlement patterns in Uasin Gishu, interviews and direct observation.

*Secondary sources* include, among others, analyses of the political developments in Kenya and other relevant historical accounts of the country. Further, literature on political crises and civil war; state - society relations in Africa; ethnicity, clientelism and nationalism, is discussed.

Altogether 20 *interviews* were conducted. The people I interviewed included ordinary Kenyans; women and men, young and old, Christians and Muslims, well educated and those with minimal education, and six different ethnic groups (Kikuyu, Kalenjin, Luo, Luhya, Kamba and Somali). The interviews were essential to accessing critical information of events that were not yet well documented in written sources, and to confirming information from other sources. But above all, they were useful for a thorough understanding of the voting patterns and the argumentation used by the different parties about the reasons underlying their political voting behaviour. The interviews were of a semi-structured type. An interview guide with 30 questions was prepared before the fieldwork, and worked as a “checklist” for me to know what questions I needed the informants to answer. However, I usually started out by asking quite open questions to give the informants the opportunity to elaborate on the issues that were important to them. Usually, it was not necessary for me to ask all the questions, many of them were in fact answered before I had had the time to ask. In some instances I also gave priority to additional information that I could get from

listening to what the informants wanted to talk about rather than to follow my guide strictly. However, I made sure to guide the conversation so that the major questions were answered.

In addition to the interviews I also organised one *focus group* discussion in Eldoret, with seven participants between 23 to 39 years. The group consisted of four Kalenjins and three Kikuyus. As the focus group session was organised at the end of my field work in Uasin Gishu I was able to use the forum to test some of the typical responses from my interviews in an open discussion. It was interesting to observe how direct and honest the participants were when we confronted the issues of ethnic grudges and tensions between the two groups. The focus group acted as a supplement to the interviews and gave me a deeper understanding of the sentiments and rationales connected to electoral behaviour in Uasin Gishu.

I used a digital recorder for about one-third of the interviews. This gave me the chance to concentrate on the conversation, and I did not get the impression that it disturbed the informant. They spoke freely and I was surprised how open my informants were in all the interviews. When the recorder was not used, it was either because there was too much noise in the environment or the interviews were translated. Half of my interviews were translated. As my informants were mostly ordinary, the education level varied and many did not speak English well enough. Translation was therefore needed. I used four different translators, and in all but one interview the understanding and translation was satisfactory. One incident occurred in an IDP camp in Burnt Forrest, Uasin Gishu District, where a local resident who spoke English insisted on translating for me. Showing respect and meeting their wishes was important, since I was not paying anything for their time and effort. The local translator spoke high-quality English, but was so eager that he himself answered many of the questions at the same time as he translated what the informant had said. This gave me more information, but also made me suspicious of what he really communicated to the informant. His influence on the situation made me question whether he translated his own or the informants' thoughts on the different subjects. The other translators were

well informed socially and politically, and understood both my research topic and how the interviews were going to be conducted. Two of them were my research assistants in Uasin Gishu and Korogocho respectively, and the last one was a relative of my research assistant in Korogocho. We had good communication among ourselves and I felt confident that they translated the questions the way I meant to ask them, although some nuances in some of the answers probably got lost. Having them join the interviews, however, also helped create a friendly atmosphere, which benefited the interview. On the whole I was pleased with the interviews I made with a translator.

Two contacts worked as research assistants during my fieldwork, one in Korogocho and one in Uasin Gishu. They helped me set up my interview appointments after I had given them criteria to identify the informants. They were a crucial resource during my fieldwork. It would hardly have been possible without them. As mentioned, in some instances they also acted as the translators.

There are two major methodological problems with the use of research assistants. Firstly, they choose interviewees, which obviously gave them considerable power. However, I was clear on the selection criteria, and they both complied fully with my wishes. Sometimes they had suggestions on perspectives I might have missed and suggested persons who could give this perspective. I listened to them on some occasions and not in others. Secondly, I often discussed the interviews with them afterwards, opening the possibility that my impressions were coloured by my background. In cases where my research assistants participated in the interviews, there is a possibility that their presence may have influenced the informant. Yet, it did not feel as if it coloured their answers particularly much. I was on several occasions positively surprised about my informants' openness when it came to sensitive information.

### 4.3 Methodological limitations

The relationship between electoral behavior, ethnic affiliation and economic well-being has been given relatively little attention, and the aim of this thesis is thus to explore this relationship. This does not mean that I expect to find one single answer to the question why Kenyans vote the way they do. Neither will our analysis allow us to comparatively measure the effect of ethnic affiliation and economic well-being on electoral behaviour against other factors. Rather, it is an attempt at shedding light on the intricate interconnections between economic well-being and socio-economic interests and ethnic rationales and identities with regards to electoral behaviour.

While this thesis will shed light on the impact of economic well-being and perceptions of marginalisation on voting behaviour, I do not purport to claim that economic values is the only relevant political cleavage when Kenyans decide how to vote. I will therefore go through some of the familiar rational choice theories in electoral behaviour research to try to sort those that influence voting behaviour from those that do not.

Because of my relatively limited sample (20 interviews plus one focus group discussion with seven people), my conclusions need further research to support wider generalisation. I will nonetheless argue that my selection of respondents has been done with careful regard to including different age groups and ethnic identities, ensuring a gender balance, and covering both urban and rural population groups to give a modicum of a representative reflection of Kenyan voting behaviour.

The thesis, therefore, will give indications on how the relationship between ethnicity, economic well-being and electoral behaviour unfolds in the minds of Kenyans. It will hopefully give insight on interpretations of Kenyan voting behaviour that can be helpful in further research of Kenyan politics.

## Chapter 5 - Analysis

In Chapter 2 I showed the demographic developments of Kenyan settlement schemes and described the increasing political tensions in Kenya in the 1990s, manifested in violent disputes around the elections in 1992, 1997 and again in 2008. The political elites used ethnic ties to politicise rights such as access to land, and the deregulation of state power led to stronger ethnic divisions in the Kenyan population, which became particularly visible around a national election.

While the first section in this chapter is similar to most analyses of Kenya which focus on historical tensions between ethnic groups and personal political tactics and power struggles, the next section will look at what might be seen as rational electoral behaviour for any individual and in so doing try to explain, on the basis of interviews, why ethnicity might be seen as an epiphenomenon when Kenyans decide how to vote.

The discussion is organised around the theoretical perspectives presented in Chapter 3, but in this chapter I will revise the sequence and start with the different approaches to ethnicity followed by the different approaches to electoral behaviour.

### 5.1 Ethnic divisions

Difficult relationships between population groups are not new to Kenya. From the dawn of independence the different ethnic groups have quarrelled about access to land and state resources (see Chapter 2). Some scholars argue that ethnic identities and the history of ethnic antagonism that characterise Kenyan society are key factors in understanding the current political situation. Jeffrey Steeves (2006:197), for instance, states when writing about Kenya that “the individual in Africa is defined by one’s ethnic community and thus one’s loyalty and actions are framed within an ethnic identity. Given the ethno-regional character of African countries, political leadership is bounded by and serves the ethnic community”.

Explanations that use ethnic or other family-based identities as the starting point for understanding social phenomena characterise the primordialist school. A primordialist view holds that conflicts between groups are the result of antagonisms that are based on ethnic affiliation and have been built up over the years.

Conflicts over land in the former white highlands in Kenya are often described by old antagonisms between groups. However, Gabrielle Lynch brings our attention to the relevance of common perceptions of how political representation and redistribution actually works in Kenya. Based on her studies of the land issue in the Rift Valley and Western Provinces (e.g. the Mt. Elgon area), she reveals that processes of ethnic negotiation and renegotiation in Kenya are ultimately fuelled by the desire to stake claims to and access resources controlled by the Kenyan state and external agents (Lynch 2006:49).

Lynch views ethnicities as complex and contested social constructions, ‘in an endless process of transformation’. Her essay “Negotiating ethnicity” (2006) reveals the ways in which ethnic boundaries, their relevant contents, allies and members are actually contested and negotiated in Kenya today. Revealing not only how ethnicities may evolve, she also shows how individuals and communities can, within limits, choose their ethnic identity, relevant ethnic history, and ethnic allies. This approach and the documentation advanced by Lynch poses a problem for a primordialist understanding which would see identity as a given, not as subject to influence from institutional or other factors.

### 5.1.1 Elite manipulation and the politicisation of ethnicity

While purely primordialist perspectives on ethnicity are rare in contemporary debates concerning the Kenyan society, analyses that lie close to instrumentalist perspectives are more widespread. In fact, instrumentalist perspectives on ethnicity seem to fit very well with the predominant analyses of the political situation in Kenya, focusing on manipulations of identity by the elite. According to an instrumentalist view on ethnicity, ethnic conflict appears when political leaders see it to be in their interest to

amplify ethnic sentiments. Ethnicity has in Kenya already during colonial times played a role in the political formation of the country. The colonial powers created tension between different ethnic tribes in the transition from colony to independence when introducing settlement schemes such as Olenguruone which mostly benefited the Kikuyu, and again through the introduction of the concept of ‘willing seller – willing buyer’ in the process of returning some of the land previously owned by the white settlers to Kenyans (Kimenyi and Ndugu 2005; Rosenberg and Nottingham 1996).

After independence, the three presidents – Jomo Kenyatta, Daniel arap Moi, and Mwai Kibaki – have all used ethnopolitics as a political strategy during their time in office. Ethnic sentiments have been played upon especially during the run up to political elections, which in three instances has ended with severe political violence (1992, 1997 and 2008). Although both Kenyatta and Moi very consciously ensured that representatives of all ethnic groups were integrated in the political system, ethnic affiliation still played a role in the highly personalised political management of the country and thus always held a potential for politicisation.

President Jomo Kenyatta used both the carrot and the stick to maintain power. He used land and civil service jobs to buy loyalty while opposition parties were subjected to political harassment. Those individuals who refused to support the status quo experienced various types of repression and even detention without trial (Waki report 2008:24). To protect the large properties accumulated by collaborators with the colonial regime and members of the establishment in the Central Province, Kenyatta decided to resettle the Kikuyu landless poor and Mau Mau supporters on Kalenjin land in the Rift Valley. With this move he favoured his own ethnic group and gave them a head start in economic development (ICG report 2008:13).

According to Crawford (1998), resource scarcity may tempt the political elite to privilege particular groups because they no longer can afford to uphold general welfare policies and because patronage networks as allocative mechanisms require few transaction costs (Crawford 1998:25). Diminishing resources would hence lead to

increasing patronage which was the case during Moi's presidency from 1978 until 2002. Daniel arap Moi became more draconian than his predecessor. First of all, President Moi did not start off with the same amount of resources (e.g. land, civil service jobs, and a buoyant coffee industry) as was available to Kenyatta to reward his supporters and the general public. Secondly, in 1982, Moi experienced an attempted coup d'état against his presidency (Waki report 2008:25). President Moi's actions were designed to destroy the economic base of his opponents and to bolster his own position and that of his supporters, who were mainly drawn from his KAMATUSA (Kalenjin, Masai, Turkana and Sambura) allies from the marginal areas (Ibid.). During election periods, a pattern had been established of groups forming and using extra-state violence with impunity against specific tribes in certain areas to obtain political power. Gangs and militias continued to proliferate all over the country, thereby increasing the presence of institutionalised extra-state violence both during and after elections, a pattern that was reinforced up until and through the 2007 elections, even after President Mwai Kibaki took over power in 2002 (Waki report 2008:27).

The deliberate personalisation of presidential power made the politicisation of ethnicity and use of state violence possible. The Waki report from 2008 was the end result of the Commission of Inquiry into the Post Election Violence (CIPEV). The work done by this independent commission was funded by both the Government of Kenya and the multi donor Trust Fund for National Dialogue and Reconciliation, managed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). A huge apparatus of field visits and hearings across Kenya provided the foundation of the Commission which was mandated to investigate the facts and circumstances surrounding the violence around the 2007 elections. The report explains how power has been personalised around the presidency and that this has been increased through changes in the Constitution under each president since independence. Laws were routinely passed to increase executive authority. Between 1963 and 1991, the Constitution had been amended 32 times (Waki Report 2008:23). Even following the election of Kibaki in 2002 rules were ignored by ministries, underscoring the fact that the personal power of the President and his close associates trumped the law. Individuals in various parts of

government, whether in the civil service, the judiciary, and even in parliament, understood that, irrespective of the laws, the executive arm of government determines what happens. Hence, the state is not seen as neutral but as the preserve of those in power (Waki Report 2008:24). On the part of the public this means that given the power of the President and the political class everything flows not from laws but from the President's power and personal decisions. This also led the public to believe a person from their own tribe must be in power, both to secure for them benefits and as a defensive strategy to keep other ethnic groups, should these take over power, from taking jobs, land and entitlements (Ibid).

There is a common understanding from my respondents that the state is in no way neutral. In fact, all my respondents stated that people are treated unequally in encounters with the state apparatus. There is furthermore a general distrust in politicians that is also echoed by all the respondents. Politicians are perceived as a separate political class and the clear sentiment expressed is that nobody in this political class, no matter what ethnic group they belong to, are trustworthy. Repeatedly, disillusionment is articulated, as many states that they have lost hope in politics all together. All interviewees, across the board, contribute to painting a picture of a political environment where most Kenyans do not believe that politicians can make any change for others than themselves. The statement below is typical of the kind of responses given:

“I do not trust politicians, they are all the same. They just want to eat for themselves, they don't think about us, the people”

– (interview) *Luhya man, 22 years, Korogocho*

Even though this criticism applies to all politicians, independent of ethnic belonging, there seems to be a common belief that at the end of the day it is nevertheless safer to vote for somebody from your own ethnic group. The rational seems to be that if there somehow should be the slightest possibility for you to get a job or to be granted a loan, it would have to be in a situation where your own ethnic group has power over state

resources. I found that the older generation of Kenyans would much easier admit to voting for people from their own ethnic groups than the rest of the population. Among my respondents four were in the 60+ age group and in addition I had informal discussions with several others in the same age group. All of these were very blunt about the rationale behind their voting and gave similar statements to the effect that they voted for people from their own ethnic group in parliamentary elections, and furthermore that they in presidential elections voted for the person their ethnic leader supported. The reasons they offered were in part that this was how it had always been, and that they believed it would somehow bring benefits in one form or another.

“It is easier to get benefits from your own tribe because we understand each other better”

- *(interview) Kikuyu woman, 62 years, Uasin Gishu*

“I voted for Raila because he is from the same tribe as me, maybe I will get benefits”

- *(interview) Luo man, 79 years, Korogocho*

The rest of my respondents, who in interviews stated that they voted for people from the same ethnic group as themselves, gave other reasons than tribal ones for voting the way they did. Strikingly, many respondents contradicted themselves when first stating that they did not trust any politicians, while later in the interview stating that they were very satisfied with some politicians from their own tribe. The impression conveyed indicates that voting along ethnic lines according to ethnic rationales is something Kenyans would be reluctant to admit, but ultimately end up doing. It must be added, however, that while they gave reasons that could be interpreted as being ethnic, most respondents argued politically and had no problems giving specific political reasons for voting as they did, either for a candidate or a party. This quote from a Kikuyu woman is a good example of the kind of responses I got when I asked about how and why individuals voted the way they did:

“Politicians are all the same, they all give us promises but they don’t do anything (...) I voted Kibaki because I am satisfied with what he has done, especially with education and property rights (...) We (Kikuyu) like to own things. I like to say this is mine”

- *Kikuyu woman, 45 years, Korogocho*

It further appears that perceptions of marginalisation are also playing a key role for a substantial segment of voters, and that such perceptions of marginalisation have been strengthened within certain ethnic communities, while not being equally prevalent among others. When giving reasons for their voting, individuals in ethnic groups that typically expressed feelings of marginalisation often stated that they believed the candidate they voted for would provide a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth. In my research I found that the sense of ethnic belonging is stronger among the Kalenjin, the Luo and the Kikuyu, while the perception of being increasingly marginalised is stronger among the Kalenjins and the Luo who feel betrayed and marginalised by the Kikuyu in power during the decades following the independence.

Apart from the Luo and the Kalenjin, members of other ethnic communities also expresses a feeling of marginalisation, and a perception that the Kikuyu historically have benefited disproportionately both with regards to monetary and material wealth and with regards to political power. Still, I never experienced the feeling of “personal” betrayal to be as strong in interviews with other ethnic communities as with the Luo and the Kalenjin. However, this does not necessarily imply that such perceptions of marginalisation are exclusive to the Luo and the Kalenjin. Based on shorter visits to Lamu District, I believe there is reason to assume that further research along these same lines in the coastal areas of Lamu and Tana Districts would reveal similar sentiments of betrayal and marginalisation. Here, settlement schemes such as the Lake Kenyatta settlement scheme have moved a great number of mainly Kikuyu into native Mijikenda land.

Members of the ethnic community that has most clearly benefited from the post-independent patterns of resource allocation, the Kikuyu, often stated political reasons for their electoral behaviour and overwhelmingly placed emphasis on securing property rights and on less redistributionist policies. This was the case even though they personally had not been in a position where they benefited directly from post-independent policies. These ideologically rightist points of view are mirrored by a somehow opposite stand among mainly the Luo who harboured typically leftist attitudes as a common denominator. A certain political aspect thus seems to have become embodied in the ethnic stereotypes that are so influential in Kenyan politics. These politicised ethnic stereotypes and identities are making its mark on Kenyan electoral behaviour. I address this further when I return to the issue of ideology.

It should perhaps be reiterated at this point that it is not always the case that Kenyans vote for people from their own tribe. Nor is the reason for such an electoral decision necessarily related to the prospect of personal benefit. Of the twenty people I interviewed, seven voted for an MP with an ethnic background different from their own, and four voted for a presidential candidate that was not supported by leading politicians from their own tribe. I will elaborate on this below.

### 5.1.2 Politicisation of ethnicity; summed up

Instrumental perspectives on ethnicity can be useful in highlighting how identities related to ethnicity have been tactically used and manipulated for the purposes of personal and political gain. An important contribution of the instrumentalist school is the recognition that ethnic identity is not naturally given but rather formed by historical and political processes, such as conflict over land and discussion over the constitutional dispensation.

President Kenyatta increasingly favoured his ethnic group, the Kikuyu, in matters of land distribution. He also secured a centralised form of state which kept him in control of state resources. Moi did nothing to alter the established patterns of a 'distorted' distribution of land when he took office. He increased the powers of the Presidency

even beyond the levels of Kenyatta's and he maintained the centralised state intact. At the same time Moi gave preferential treatment to his own ethnic group, the Kalenjin, and those closely related, the KAMATUSA, in matters of employment and local improvement. Kibaki campaigned with the promise of giving the country a new constitution within 100 days of his new administration. When in power, he changed the 'Bomas draft' to retain the powerful Presidency and the strong centralised state.

These developments led Kenyans in general to lose faith in a neutral state and to a certain extent in politicians altogether. The concentration of power around the president, however, made many Kenyans believe that people from their own ethnic group have to be in power in order both to secure benefits and as a defensive strategy to keep other ethnic groups, should these take over power, from taking jobs, land and entitlements.

The shortcoming of instrumentalist perspectives, however, is that they tend to ignore the importance of identities other than ethnic identities, and hence to underestimate the effect that economic and other political factors may have on individuals when deciding to vote, independently of ethnicity.

Section 5.2 shows how rational electoral behaviour for any individual may have other sources than ethnicity. I will discuss different rationales from section 3.1 and try to explain why ethnicity might be seen as an epiphenomenon when Kenyans decide how to vote.

## 5.2 Social cleavages – ethnicity, religion and class

### 5.2.1 Ethnicity

The fact that the social position of a voter correlates with his or her party choice is one of the most long lasting and well documented facts in research on electoral behaviour (Oskarson 2005:84). The idea originated from the political-sociological approach of Lipset and Rokkan that electoral choices are based on a limited number of social

cleavages. The argument is that if you belong to a certain segment of the society and there is a political party representing that particular segment of society, you are likely to vote for that party. In the Kenyan setting, chapter two showed that the most prominent and operational social cleavages have been and still are those between ethnic groups. Social class could also be a factor, but the political parties have focused on drawing support more from ethnic groups rather than social classes. This perspective implies that the importance of social cleavages for party choice does not only depend on the nature and strength of the cleavages, but also on how the parties relate to the cleavage. In other words, if there is no party that could be perceived as representing a certain group better than other parties, it is less likely that the group will vote according to a coherent pattern. Cleavage voting refers to the interaction between socio-structural groups and political parties (Oskarson 2005:85). Using Lipset's and Rokkan's argument would suggest that in Kenya the voters would have a tendency to vote for the party representing their ethnic group preferences best. In the previous section I made the point that this is the case for a great number of Kenyans, especially with the older generation. The political parties and their leaders have used ethnicity as a motivating factor to obtain support, and during the multiparty era, ethnic communities have tended to support their 'own' political parties or 'alliances'. Party differences and competition have been reinforced by ethnic cleavages and stereotypes (Andreassen et al. 2008:7).

### 5.2.2 Religion

Kenya's population comprises several religious groups, whereof approximately 80% are Christians and 10-20% Muslims (Oded 2000:1). In the coastal areas the Muslim segment accounts for more than 50% of the population. In the north of Kenya, most of the residents are Somalis, which is an almost exclusively Muslim population group. There are also a considerable number of Muslims in the large towns, including Nairobi, Nakuru, Kisumu and Eldoret. In the western part of the country there are concentrations of Muslims in Mumias and Homa Bay (Oded :200:12). Religion could therefore serve as a significant social cleavage if there were parties actually representing Christians and Muslims interests separately. In the Kenyan setting,

however, this has not been the case. The Kenyan government, like the governments of Uganda and Tanzania and other East African countries, prohibited the formation of political parties based on religion (Oded 2000:21). It could be suggested that prominent politicians like Najib Balala representing the Coast in Kenyan politics, is not just a representative of a particular tribe (Mijikenda), but may indeed also represent the Muslim community as such. There was, however, no support for this sort of assertion among neither the Muslims I talked to informally nor the two Muslims I interviewed in Korogocho. Although they all placed religion above ethnicity as an identity marker, with respect to the question of marriage, none of the Muslims in Korogocho felt loyal towards fellow Muslims from the Coastal Province. The reasons for their electoral choice were focused on other aspects.

### 5.2.3 Class

Economic class, which has been the dominant social determinant in European electoral behaviour, has not had the same effect on political party systems in Africa, in this case Kenya. The huge differentials of income have not manifested themselves in political parties. Instead, inequalities in the distribution of resources and access to the state have been connected to interethnic inequalities by political entrepreneurs who have had an interest in mobilising ethnicity to gain political support, just as Rothschild (1981) describes. Based on similar experiences from the typical European setting, the economic decline and increasing level of poverty in Kenya in the 1980s and 1990s could easily have had a potential for influencing political events and outcomes. Economic class could have been used as mobilising basis of social movements lobbying for job opportunities, real wages increments and fair distribution of land. This never happened. A possible explanation might be found in what is outlined in this chapter as the link between political preferences and ethnic identities (see *Value Orientations* and *Ideology*).

All in all, we can conclude that class and religious voting is of minor importance in Kenyan society. Ethnic voting, by contrast, does play a role in Kenyan electoral behaviour. My argument is that political parties in Kenya also represent other

cleavages apart from ethnicity. Certain issues, such as the devolution of power (*majimboism*) and the role and powers of the presidency, have been important for different parties, and although economic class has not been used directly to mobilise voters, inequalities in the distribution of land and resources have been and still are major issues in Kenyan politics.

### 5.3 Long-term predispositions

#### 5.3.1 Party identification – KANU

Social roots are not the only possible basis for enduring party preference. In the Michigan tradition of electoral research, party identification had the function of ensuring people's lasting attachment to a political party (Berglund et al. 2005:106). The historically dominant party in Kenya, KANU, held a unique position in Kenyan society and political life since independence. People who at an early stage believed in KANU's vision and ability to make substantial changes in their lives and for the country, may have developed a party identification along these lines. Such an identity could have led many Kenyans to continue voting for the same party not based on its performance or its social and ethnic distinctiveness, but 'simply' because it was what they had habitually always done.

In my inquiries I found this to be partially true. There are different opinions about the change from single-party to multi-party politics. After multi-party politics was reintroduced in Kenya in 1991, a majority of Kenyans remained loyal to KANU. In many aspects KANU succeeded in its attempt at convincing Kenyans that multi-party politics would lead to a more ethnically fragmented society. The violence around the 1992 and 1997 elections were seen by many as a direct consequence of the reintroduction of multi-party politics. During this period Kenya was simultaneously experiencing economic decline which of course affected the general population, leading many to the conclusion that it was in fact the new era of multi-party politics that had destabilised Kenyan society. Looking closer at the responses from my interviewees who were old enough to have voted in 1992 and 1997, half of this group

remained loyal to KANU throughout the 1990s. In Korogocho I found no ethnic pattern in the distribution of votes between KANU and opposition parties, but in Uasin Gishu none of the Kikuyu voted for KANU and all except one Kalenjin voted for KANU in the 1990s. As explained in Chapter 2, KANU's strategy to manipulate electoral support through ethno-political violence in the 1992 elections was successful and this is probably why the Kalenjin voted for KANU whereas the Kikuyus did not (Section 2.3.2, Andreassen 2003:174). Reviewing the interviews, however, the most common reason the Kalenjin respondents gave for voting KANU was that they knew the party and how things had been during their rule and were more or less satisfied. They were therefore sceptical to other parties which from their perspective seemed only interested in power. They believed that multiparty politics would mean chaos. This quote from a Kalenjin woman is a good example of the kind of sentiments expressed by those who voted for KANU throughout the 1990s:

“It was better with one party; Moi was good at first, he employed people, it was easier to live, cheaper food. We didn't see any change with multiparty politics, now everybody is just fighting.”

*- Kalenjin woman, 50 years, Uasin Gishu*

At the same time, all my respondents both in Korogocho and Uasin Gishu stated that they had longed for more freedom of choice and freedom of speech and that they were jubilant about the democratic opening from single-party to multi-party politics, even though it took some time before the opposition managed to launch an alternative that all Kenyans could believe in. In the 2002 election when Moi picked Uhuru Kenyatta as his successor, many loyal supporters left KANU and voted for the opposition NARC. All my respondents, except one, claimed they voted for Kibaki and NARC in the 2002 election.

Even though KANU did indeed have a strong position in Kenyan political life after independence, that era has come to an end. Kenyan politics have always been driven by strong individual personalities, and this became more evident after the introduction

of multiparty politics. I saw a clear tendency in my studies that Kenyans vote for individuals and what they stand for, not political parties. I will come back to this later. A conclusion of this section must be that party identification has seen a decline in the Kenyan society along with the decline of the erstwhile dominant political party KANU.

### 5.3.2 Value orientations

“Political values are prescriptive beliefs, which individuals would like to see implemented in the political system, and include the forms of political participation by which individuals seek to influence politics” (Knutsen and Kumlin 2005:125).

As explained in chapter 3, the argument made in European electoral theory is that even when social cleavages lose political significance, the value orientation that historically was a part of these social cleavages might not lose their significance. For instance, even though the class cleavages in Europe might lose some of the defining impact it once had, the value of economic “equitable distribution of income” might still be of great importance. The most important political value orientation in Europe has been left-right values or left-right materialist values. These value orientations are economic in nature, and they refer in particular to the role of government in creating more economic equality in society, on the one hand, and in providing economic incentives and efficiency, on the other. They incorporate value conflicts related to control, power, and the degree of distribution of resources in the production sphere; state regulation of the economy versus private enterprise; private property and market economy versus economic and social equality; and the need for differentiated rewards for stimulating effort (Knutsen and Kumlin 2005:125).

Contrary to class, the social cleavage of ethnicity does not have an inherent political value. And contrary to politics in Europe, the most important social cleavage in politics in Kenya is ethnicity. This does not imply, however, that there are no value orientations stemming from underlying social cleavages in the case of Kenya. In Kenya, economic values connected to the distribution of resources and state control

has been at the core of electoral behaviour, economic equality and inequality are highly relevant to voters when deciding how to vote. And as discussed in section 4.1.1 regarding elite manipulation and politicisation of ethnicity, I have found that political preferences in these matters appear to be embodied in the ethnic identities that seem so influential in Kenyan voting behaviour. I will discuss this further in the next section, when analysing the impact and importance of ideology. Here, however, I will just note that my analysis of the interviews I conducted indicates that instead of being tied to the social cleavage of class, economic values in Kenya has through historical events, to a certain extent, been expressed through the social cleavage of ethnicity.

### 5.3.3 Ideology

The ideological orientation is connected to the class cleavage and is traditionally conceived as a dichotomy between left and right. Difference between left and right are reflected in the twin concepts of economic equality and inequality and the role of the government and the market (Thomassen 2005:13). The left-right continuum has traditionally been looked upon in electoral research as one of the most important dimensions to describe voters' substantive political orientation. In combination with their perception of where political issues are located on the same dimension, these orientations allow an instrumental mode of electoral choice (Van der Eijk et al. 2005:167). And as said before, during the fight for independence, when African political systems were being shaped, the division between capitalism (right) and socialism (left) was at the centre of events. This was also the case in Kenya.

The most used reasoning in Europe is that the social cleavage that contributed to the formation of the European party system, economic class, still provides meaning to the terms 'left' and 'right' and to voters' individual position on the left-right continuum (Van der Eijk et al. 2005:168). During the fight for independence, KANU and Kenyatta proclaimed that they would establish a socialist state with equal distribution of social and economic welfare. After independence, however, the economy was oriented more in the direction of capitalism and foreign investment. Chapter 2 showed that the ideological cleavage between 'left' and 'right' manifested itself inside KANU,

with the Luo politician Oginga Odinga representing the socialist (left) side, and most of the rest of the party's leadership including Jomo Kenyatta representing the conservative (right) side (Ochieng' 1989:214-216).

It is argued that the two most influential political parties in Kenya today can also be compared to what we in Europe would label socialist and capitalist parties. Andreassen et al. (2008) have made a comparative analysis of the two main contenders in the 2007 election: the PNU led by Mwai Kibaki and the ODM led by Raila Odinga. Their conclusion is that the PNU and the ODM election manifestos differ in important respects. There is, they claim, what might be termed a left-right cleavage centred on distributional issues: the PNU favours growth *per se*, implicitly believing in the market and its 'trickle down' effect as distributive mechanisms, whereas the ODM favours interventionist distribution policies related to land, social services and other resources to ensure social justice. There is also a governance cleavage where the PNU favours a unitary system of government while the ODM prefers far-reaching devolution of decision-making authority to lower tiers of government (Andreassen et al. 2008:64).

When asked about whether they had read the political manifestos of the ODM or the PNU nearly all respondents I talked to answered "no". The only one who claimed he had read the manifestos was a well educated older man who had previously worked in the public service. Nevertheless, when it came to certain issues such as the devolution of power and the distribution of land, everybody had an opinion about the different parties or what their presidential candidates stood for. In some cases their perceptions did not match reality, but overall the interviewees indicated that they had a good overview and understanding of what the party and candidate they voted for actually represented.

As I will elaborate on later, it seems to be the different leaders and individual personalities in the parties, and not the parties themselves, that represent and articulate the respective ideologies. The various politicians represent more or less the same political line and ideology regardless of their party affiliation. President Mwai Kibaki

is himself an example. As an active and visible politician in Kenyan political life ever since independence, Mwai Kibaki has continuously represented a right-wing or capitalist policy, based on a firm belief in the principles of the market economy coupled with support for a centralised governance system. Father and son, Oginga Odinga and Raila Odinga, have, on the other hand, represented a belief in a decentralised governance system and in interventionist distribution policies. If a given voter of Kikuyu origin has voted for Kibaki in every election one might, therefore, draw the conclusion that his electoral behaviour is based on ethnicity, or you could claim that he is voting based on ideological preference. Similarly, if a Luo who has continuously voted for the Odinga family one might make similar claims. In my research, I found that the Luo and Kikuyu I talked to in Korogocho, especially if the older generation (60+) is left out, argued politically and ideologically when asked who they voted for. The same was true for the youth (<40) in Eldoret, although they had a stronger ethnic element in their consciousness owing generally to recent experiences of violence. At the same time, there were a few cases of a Kalenjin or a Luo having voted for a Kikuyu, or a Kikuyu having voted for a Luo. In these cases the respondents almost always argued ideologically.

“I have voted for Kibaki in all four multi-party elections (...) Raila’s father was a great politician, but he didn’t want anything like buying farms, he was a socialist so to speak, and Raila never changed from this line. Kibaki is a capitalist, and I would label myself a capitalist”

- *Kalenjin man, 66 years, Uasin Gishu*

To wrap up, I would claim on this basis that economic ideology certainly plays a role in the electoral behaviour of Kenyans. This might, however, at times be hard to detect from just looking at the mere electoral results, where statistics evidently shows that voting patterns significantly correlate with ethnic divisions. As historical injustices and perceptions of marginalisation have been strengthened among certain ethnic groups, ideology and ethnicity are both leading to similar voting patterns. Ethnicity thus, might be seen as an epiphenomenon when Kenyans decide how to vote.

#### 5.3.4 Clientelism

Clientelism is defined as transactions between politicians and citizens whereby material favours are offered in return for political support at the polls (Wantchekon 2003:399).

There are several variations of clientelism, but all involve a mutually beneficial exchange between patrons and clients. An intermediate form of clientelism involves a hierarchy, starting with elites who have access to government funds, these elites then channel funds through local intermediaries (in ethnically heterogeneous states, these intermediaries are often clan elders) who, in turn, distribute some of the wealth to the voters. This form of clientelism would not rely on direct, personal exchanges. There is also clientelism in personalistic forms, whereby voters expect personal or communal benefits directly from their elected officials (Young 2009:1).

The basic premise underlying clientelistic networks is logical. Voters enjoy direct benefits, and upon receiving them, feel indebted to the patron (politician) and would be inclined to support him in the hope of receiving further benefits in the future. In his research of Kenyan voting behaviour, Young (2009) found that being offered a gift in return for a vote or being in direct contact with an MP makes little difference to the voters' preference. Rather, visiting the constituency is more likely to help an incumbent MP's re-election bid. Voting behaviour will thus be shaped by the voters' assessment of a given MP's dedication to the constituency.

The intermediate form of clientelism seems to be of diminishing significance in Kenya. Although "elders" have held and still hold an important position in Kenyan culture, I did not find evidence that the role of elders were of significant importance when members of a community were deciding to vote. In my research, especially Kalenjin respondents stated clearly that people used to listen to the "elders" of their clan in political matters, including who to vote for, but that this was no longer the case. Although "elders" were referred to and talked about with the deepest respect and often

gave advice on how to vote, the predominant assertion was that people made up their own mind and that the advice of the “elders” was no longer critical.

Moving from the intermediate to more direct forms of clientelism, the findings made by Young are in line with my own. With regard to parliamentary elections, voters are concerned with the sitting MP’s performance and what he/she has done for the constituency. My respondents described mechanisms whereby voters would typically be willing to re-elect an MP who throughout the election period continuously had been visiting the communities within his or her constituency. Furthermore, all my respondents recognised the prevalence of MPs giving personal contributions from their own wallet back to his constituency, such as scholarships, financial support to a community shelter or a church, supporting local initiatives and so forth. This form of clientelism is widespread in Kenya. However, the statements and response from the interviewees do not provide sufficient evidence to draw any firm conclusions regarding the impact of these practices on electoral behaviour.

The relationship between political clientelism and ethnicity has often been discussed in political science theory. The form of clientelism discussed here does not necessarily occur along ethnic lines. Half of the Kikuyu respondents from Uasin Gishu reported to have voted for a local Kalenjin candidate in the parliamentary election although they voted for Kibaki – a Kikuyu – as president. The reasons they gave was similar in character to the argumentation above. If the sitting MP had been visiting both the Kalenjin and the Kikuyu community, both Kikuyu and Kalenjin would vote for him again. If another MP candidate had visited the community and promised to do something for the people living there, they might vote for him, regardless of ethnic identities. The decisive factor appears to be who they believed they could trust to keep their promises. Especially the young generation seemed to weigh the relevant candidates against each other and make a choice based, on trust, not ethnic identity. This quote is representative:

“I voted for Peris [Peris Chepchumba, a Kalenjin], she has been here and I think maybe she can make some change. She was the best candidate”

- *Kikuyu man, 28 years, Uasin Gishu*

However, my respondents added that if an MP was seen to be treating the Kikuyu and Kalenjin communities unequally, this could generate ethnic tensions and cause the community who see themselves as unfairly treated and possibly induce people or whole communities to favour another candidate from their own ethnic group in the next election.

Documenting prevalence and relevance with respect to clientelism and clientelist practice are two different challenges. The respondents gave responses consistent with the findings of Young as to the prevalence of certain practises, but the feedback with regard to the actual impact of these practices is inconclusive. In order to determine what the impact of these widespread practices is on electoral behaviour in Kenya, more detailed research would be needed. I have in my studies researched this element as one of several and not been able to find a conclusive correlation. This applies as well the intermediary forms of clientelism: my research was too limited to form the basis of a firm conclusion.

## 5.4 Short-term factors

### 5.4.1 Issue voting

According to Downs (1957) citizens use ideological orientations as yardsticks for developing attitudes on specific issues (Aardal and van Wijnen 2005:195). The idea is that values and ideological orientations are causally preceding attitudes towards issues. However, election-specific issues may also have an influence in the opposite direction – by activating latent values or ideological orientations. There is a clear difference between issues and values, but in practice it can be difficult to distinguish sharply between them. Issues are more narrowly defined than values – capturing particular

policy proposals of political circumstances. A particular issue may reflect the same latent cleavage as a political value, thus representing deeply embedded predispositions (Aardal and van Wijnen 2005:195).

In the Kenyan context the issues of land reform and amending the constitution have throughout the multi-party era been prominent during the electoral campaigns (Chitere et al. 2006:2). These issues also became decisive when Kenyans rejected the proposed new constitution in 2005, when many attributed the outcome to the discrepancies between the aspirations created during the 2002 elections and the substance of the Wako draft constitution. In particular, the extensive power of the presidency and the question of regional devolution (in Kenya referred to as *majimbo*) have been two very important elements of popular demand for a new constitution among Kenyans.

The key element in the campaign for the Rift Valley vote in 2007 was Odinga's support for constitutional change and *majimboism*. The notion of regional devolution of powers expressed in the Swahili term *majimbo* (meaning region) has been a feature of politics in the Rift Valley Province since colonial rule, but Kenyatta's government swept away the *majimbo* constitution within a few months of taking power. The *majimbo* debate regained momentum in the early 1990s, when Moi and his supporters played the ethnic card in efforts to suppress political opposition in the Rift Valley, declaring the province a 'KANU zone'. Since then, a small but highly vocal and extremely aggressive political campaign has emerged, promoting a radical ethno-nationalism in which *majimbo* is presented as the expulsion of non-indigenous peoples from the Rift Valley, and thus the means toward the return of all 'ancestral lands' to local Kalenjin communities (Anderson and Lochery 2008:3). In taking a pro-*majimbo* stance, Odinga did not at any point in time advocate expulsion, but he was persistently vague in explaining exactly what his policy might entail. The ODM's *majimbo* variant cleverly exploited the yearning for regional autonomy among the Kalenjin, but the ODM did not provide details on what such a devolution would involve, and many Kalenjin saw *majimbo* as a chance to "throw off the Kikuyu yoke" (ICG 2008:13).

The critical importance of the phenomenon of *majimboism* and the political issue of decentralisation or devolution of power was evident among my respondents in Uasin Gishu District, Rift Valley. Everyone had clear opinions on *majimboism*, and while many Kalenjin said they voted as they did in order to *achieve majimbo*, the Kikuyu all expressed feelings of apprehension in relations to the term *majimbo*, as they believed it would result in ethnic cleansing and that they would hence be thrown out. This interpretation of the term *majimbo* was shared by several Kalenjin, but neither the higher educated nor the young Kalenjin were among them. These two segments of the Kalenjin respondents believed *majimboism* to entail a decentralisation of power and resources, which in consequence would mean the redistribution of resources for the benefit of the people residing in the provinces, i.e. a centre-periphery understanding of the term. They still argued in favour of *majimboism*, and said that most people who opposed it had misunderstood the concept.

In the Rift Valley, the issue of *majimboism* clearly divides the population by ethnic identity and belonging. Nevertheless, the people interviewed who shared an interpretation of *majimboism* as the redistribution of resources through decentralisation rather than ethnic cleansing in any form, clearly associated *majimboism* with the political value of economic equality and further to the ideological left side of politics.

In Korogocho, *majimboism* did not seem to have the same influence on voting behaviour as in the Rift Valley, even though most people were familiar with the term. But even if *majimboism* was of far lesser significance, it was evident that the response pattern was much the same as in Uasin Gishu. The Kikuyu were against the introduction of *majimboism*, regardless of the interpretation of the term. All the other respondents were in favour of *majimboism*, but interestingly they all based their support on an understanding that *majimboism* was interpreted as decentralisation; and all were against the term if it were interpreted as meaning the ethnic cleansing of the regions.

The results of my research suggest that even though *majimboism* was extensively used by political entrepreneurs to create ethnic tension, the issue is itself political and is also widely understood as political. Based on this I would suggest that attitudes towards *majimboism* as a political issue can be placed along the left-right continuum; if you vote for the introduction of *majimboism* you can with reasonable accuracy be placed on the left side, while being against it would associate a voter with the right.

### ***Integration***

In a focus group session with seven Kalenjin and Kikuyu participants from Uasin Gishu District in the age group from 23 to 39 years, it became very apparent that integration is a serious challenge. The Kalenjin expressed a common attitude towards the Kikuyu population to the effect that the Kikuyu who live in the district ought to be more like themselves. The perception of the Kikuyu as ‘proud and aggressive businessmen’ who do not want to integrate into the Kalenjin community comes across as a common point of view. The following quote is a statement typical of the sentiments expressed by the Kalenjin focus group participants in Uasin Gishu:

“If they (the Kikuyu) had been voting with us and lived with us, we would have accepted them, but since they do not – we don’t want them here”

- *Kalenjin woman, 32 years, Uasin Gishu*

It resurfaced in every conversation I had with Kalenjin in Uasin Gishu that the Kikuyu tended to rename places they moved into. All the areas where the Kikuyu live had been renamed and given Kikuyu names from Central Province where the Kikuyu originate. The fact that this issue kept resurfacing served to highlight its symbolic significance, and as something from which people is drawing generalised conclusions and attitudes. Many emphasised how this practise was not the case in the places where the Luhya had settled; they had kept the original Kalenjin names. In several separate interviews parallels were drawn from this symbolic single issue to the broader perception of the Luhya as a much more integrated settler minority in the local community.

In the focus group, the Kikuyu on their part agreed that they as a group characteristic were both proud and good business men, but they did differ in their own view on their willingness and ability to integrate; claiming that they wanted to be a part of the local community. They all stated that they felt threatened by the Kalenjin and that they did not feel wanted. They furthermore expressed the feeling that tension and insecurity were the reasons why they were voting for the Kikuyu, especially in the presidential election. The rationale they presented was a belief that people from their own ethnic origin would provide security and safeguard their interests. In connection with the recent violence, the Kikuyu were all disappointed, however, with Kibaki whom they thought had neglected them and reacted too late. Despite of the differing perceptions of each others' intentions and attitudes, there was a very clear and common belief among all the focus group participants that the recent events had somehow brought them closer together as a community because they now all want to live in peace with each other in order to make sure the strife would not happen again.

### ***Intermarriage***

At the end of all my interviews and in the focus group discussion I brought up the issue of the possible effects of intermarriage with regard to integration, relationships between ethnic groups and voting behaviour. The response was unambiguous. The focus group claimed there would be much more intermarriages in the future, which would inevitably tie the different ethnic groups closer together, even on political questions. This was the common understanding by everybody I talked to. I only conducted one interview in Uasin Gishu with someone who was living in an ethnically mixed marriage, but everyone I interviewed either had close relatives or good friends who were living in similar unions. In Korogocho, I interviewed two individuals who were married with someone from another ethnic group, but the remaining respondents all had close friends who were living in intermarriages, or had themselves been in a relationship with someone from another ethnic group. The ones I interviewed currently living in intermarriages were all under 40 years old, and the other youths I interviewed were more relaxed and open-minded with respect to marriage or relationships across ethnic divisions. They all stated they would have no problem marrying someone from

another ethnic group; it was rather all about who they fell in love with. At the same time, they all admitted that their parents probably would be more at ease if they married someone from their own ethnic group.

I interviewed two women and one man who lived in mixed marriages and in all three instances the woman in the relationship voted for the preferred presidential candidate of the husband. In the case of elections for MPs the two women I interviewed both voted for the same candidate as their husband, but the man I interviewed did not know for whom his wife had voted as an MP. Both female interviewees stated that the husband had managed to influence them to vote the way they did, but that his arguments had been political and they really believed that the President and MP they voted for was the best candidate for the country. This is what one of my respondent answered when I asked who she had voted for, and if she thought she had been influenced by her Luo husband:

“I voted for Raila cause I was tired of this Kibaki person. I voted to get him out. I wanted to see what Raila could do for us, I wanted to see change (....) I was probably influenced by my husband - I would say yes. You know, when I listened to my other relatives, how they spoke about Raila, it didn't make sense to me. I think they spoke badly of him because he is from the Luo community. I don't think they have really sat down and thought about how he is different from Kibaki and what he can offer to us.”

- *Kikuyu woman, 27 years, Korogocho*

The respondent further explained, when I asked about her friends and people in her own generation, that she had told all her friends whom she was voting for and that they had no problem with her decision. She had many other friends who lived in intermarriages and she believed that it would become more and more normal to do so. Her perception was that young people do not think about ethnicity when it comes to friends and boyfriends. “It seems like it only matters around an election – but this will change with time because eventually we all will be married to each other” she added,

with a smile. Interestingly, her statements correlate with those from the other respondents in her age group. When including the focus group (7 people), I conducted in total 15 interviews with youths in the -40 age group. The perception conveyed by the younger respondent was in this regard very clear, as they were all convinced that there would be a substantial growth in intermarriages and that this would be positive for Kenya and contribute to reducing the impact of ethnicity in politics.

#### 5.4.2 Retrospective voting

Economics is by far the dominant dimension for the study of retrospective voting. Retrospective voting presupposes that voters are assessing the past performance and the future prospects of the government and the President in office against their self-interest. Retrospective voting theory puts a stronger emphasis on the individual citizen as an actor, often with independence from parties and other collective structures and bonds of loyalty (Listhaug 2005:213). The economy is important for electoral choices, and movement in the economy has important economic effects: growth, unemployment, inflation. Negative evaluations on the economy thus hurt the electoral fortunes of incumbent parties (Listhaug 2005: 215).

In Kenya, many of my respondents used an argumentation that could be interpreted as retrospective voting, stating that they voted for the incumbent President because he has done well with regard education and general welfare, or that they voted for the opposition because they were not satisfied with the way the incumbent had done his job with respect to, for instance, a new constitution or corruption.

In Korogocho I found something interesting in this respect as far as the parliamentary elections were concerned. When asked about the former MP, a male Luo politician, and how they thought he had done while in parliament, everybody, regardless of ethnic identities, age or sex, stated that they were dissatisfied and complained that he only “ate for himself”. None of my ten respondents had voted for him again in the 2007 elections because of his unsatisfactory past performance, even though he ran for re-election. The newly elected MP in this constituency (Kasarani) is a Luo woman.

Almost everybody I asked, and all the youths, were pleased with her performance so far. After being elected she had already (September 2008) been visiting Korogocho and the perception of the voters was that the new MP had plans for developing the slum area. When asked if they would vote for her again, everybody, again regardless of ethnic identity, said that if she really did what she had so far signalled and they experienced change for the better in Korogocho in forms of better sanitation, electricity, less crime, etc., they would definitely vote for her at the next election. This kind of electoral rationales constitutes a form of retrospective voting, and can be interpreted as a clear indication of an electoral environment where a politician is assessed in terms of performance. If the voters actually see change for the better they would continue voting for this person independently of their ethnic belonging. Economic factors or other welfare-related factors seem to surpass ethnic affiliation as motivation when deciding how to vote, especially at the parliamentary level. These mechanisms would of course have to be researched thoroughly in order to draw a final conclusion, but I find it interesting that ethnic belonging in this specific setting seemed to be totally irrelevant to my respondents.

The people I talked to in Kasarani constituency had not seen or felt any change for the better during the last couple of electoral periods and expressed disillusionment with politicians and their promises. Their statements suggest a rationale that they might as well vote for politicians from their own ethnic group because they at least feel connected through a common history and culture. A possible extension of this argument would be that Kenyan voters are inclined to disregard ethnic belonging as a parameter in electoral behaviour if their elected politicians actually deliver positive economic or social developments that benefit the whole community.

#### 5.4.3 Party leaders

In recent years there has been a tendency to vote on the basis of the party leader they prefer rather than for the party they think has the best policies or will best represent their interests (Curtice and Holmberg 2005:235). Some scholars (Scarrows et al. 2000) argue that party leaders have become increasingly powerful within their own parties.

Leaders have in a sense begun to shape their parties in their own image. As a result the leader's policy becomes the party's policy, in an environment where a competent leader creates the impression of a competent party. Given the complexity of policy-making, voters may find it difficult to sort out whether the government is to blame for the state of the economy and which party has the best policy. Instead, their voting is influenced by the party leader they like best, whom they can trust or whom they need to be suspicious of (Curtice and Holmberg 2005:236).

The findings in European electoral research indicate, however, that the party leaders' influence on voting behaviour is limited. The strongest evidence that leaders do matter is where a parliamentary election comes close to mimicking a presidential contest (Curtice and Holmberg 2005:252). My findings suggest a whole different diagnosis of the Kenyan political reality. People seem to be voting for persons rather than parties, regardless of the underlying rationale being based on ethnic identity or on what the candidate stands for ideologically or on specific issues.

The party structure is weak in Kenya. Political alliances change frequently from one election to the next and new parties dissolve and emerge with high frequency. Politics is dominated, however, by the same political leaders and strongmen continuously yet in different guises, in the different alliances and in different parties. Feedback from respondents indicates that this is a reality the voters are very aware of. When talking about different policies within the different parties, this is the kind of answer 16 out of 20 respondents gave:

“Political parties do not have policies. It is about the sincerity of the individual leader, the capacity of the candidates”

- *Luo man, 34 years, Korogocho*

As mentioned under section 5.3 (Ideology), it seems to be leaders and individual personalities in the parties, not the parties themselves, that represent and articulate the

respective political agendas. The various politicians do principally represent the same political line regardless of what party or alliance they are currently in. But at the same time, they also represent their ethnic group. When a new political alliance is created, it seems to be of crucial importance that all the major ethnic groups are represented in the leadership. Chapter 2 gave examples of this, especially in the run-up to the 2002 election (section 2.4.1). To have representatives of the different ethnic groups in the leadership has also been important in the two major alliances now ruling the country – the ODM and the PNU.

Party leaders and individuals within alliances are definitely important. It is hard, however, to determine whether they are important due to ethnic affiliation or their individual ideological beliefs. In accordance with previous presented findings, I would say both.

#### 5.4.4 Vote buying

Another short-term strategy used in developing countries is to invest resources in building up credibility among voters directly through vote-buying (Keefer 2007:806). The practice of vote-buying appears in many societies and organisations, and in different forms. Obvious examples include direct payments to voters, the buying of voting cards and the promise of specific programmes or payments to voters conditional on the election of a candidate (Dekel et al. 2008:2).

All of my interviewees and everybody I had informal discussions with on the topic stated that it is very normal for the different parties and candidates to give out money in their election campaigns, and that this usually happens at political meetings and rallies. Most of my respondents, 16 out of 20, had personally been offered money, and some of them had taken what was given. Nevertheless, they all said it had little influence on their voting, as the parties no longer had any possibility to monitor who an individual is voting for. Further, the amount of money normally given on such occasions is very small (KES 50 or about NOK 5). Consequently, people who receive money do not really feel guilty for taking it even though they are not voting for the

party in question. It was explained to me that in earlier times it was possible to buy an individual's voting card and that this probably had a certain effect on the outcome of the election. This is not a common practice any more, and people did not think that vote-buying really made any difference on the outcome of an election. The common understanding was that people took money from anybody, but in the end chose their preferred candidate. This quote is representative of a majority of my respondents:

“It is very normal for MPs or other politicians to give out money before an election. I have been offered many times. Normally I take the money, but I vote for the candidate I trust most. This vote buying doesn't work”

*- Kikuyu man, 51 years old, Uasin Gishu*

My findings with regard to vote-buying in Kenya are unambiguous, and provide a basis for concluding that it has very little impact on voting behaviour. It must be added, however, that it is not possible, based on any amount of interviews, to dismiss altogether the possibility that money might be a decisive factor in individual cases; for example, when an individual does not have a clear opinion or any clear preferences as to whom he or she should be voting for.

## **Chapter 6 – Major findings and conclusion**

Ever since the reintroduction of multi-party elections in 1992, Kenya has been riddled with electoral violence with seemingly strong ethnic undercurrents. For the outside observer it might seem as if ethnic tensions within the Kenyan society are at an alarming level. The immediate perception could perhaps be that politics and elections in this context are merely a matter of ethnic power struggles in which the individual voters' electoral choices are more or less given by their ethnic affiliation. But is this really the case? The purpose of this thesis has been to explain why Kenyans appear to vote ethnically and to explore the possible relationship between ethnic identities and policy interests. What is really the rationale underlying the act of voting, what do Kenyans emphasise when they head for the ballot box?

My preliminary hypothesis was that Kenyans vote ethnically mainly because they believe it will benefit their economic interests. And that ethnicity acts as an intermediate variable or an epiphenomenon that in many cases serves as a means to an end.

Since it is impossible to explore all the relevant variables effecting Kenyans voting behaviour, my research was based on a selection of different electoral theories supplemented with theories of ethnicity.

In chapter 2 I described the political developments leading up to independence and the demographics surrounding the settlement schemes which are so critical to understanding Kenyan voting behaviour. Ethnic ties and identities were shown to have been exploited and politicised by the political elites with regard to national issues such as access to land and deregulation of state power, leading, in turn, to increased ethnic divisions within the Kenyan population that become particularly visible around national elections.

To explore the assumption that ethnicity and economic interests correlate in Kenyan voting behaviour I needed a theoretical framework to engage with both electoral behaviour and ethno-politics. Thus, in chapter 3 I first presented different theories of rational electoral behaviour and then different theories of ethnicity and ethno-politics. I also discussed the role of political institutions and political entrepreneurs in politicising ethnic identity, and finally I tried to connect ethnic affiliation with the other political motivations determining electoral behaviour.

In Chapter 4 I presented the methodological approach, and in Chapter 5 I analysed the interplay between ethnicity and rational socio-economic voting behaviour. The chapter was organised around the theoretical perspectives presented in chapter 3. I tried to differentiate between ethnic ties as reasons for voting behaviour and the different rationales put forward by distinctive electoral choice theories.

In this concluding chapter I will go through the major findings and ultimately draw conclusions from these and present elements and perspectives with relevance for further research.

## 6.1 Major findings

I went through some of the most common theories of electoral behaviour in chapter three and considered their significance to Kenya in chapter four. I will rapidly go through the elements I found to be influential on Kenyan voting behaviour and those that were not, before I will take a closer look at my major findings.

Kenyan society and its political environment have developed in a way that has left little room or relevance for the *social cleavages* of class and religion, and these have thus not been reflected in the formation of the party system. There is no significant party in Kenya today that could be perceived as representing a certain class or religion more than other parties. The only social cleavage of political significance in Kenyan society is ethnicity.

Reviewing the *long-term predispositions* I found evidence that although party identification might have been important previously, it is today not a significant determining factor of electoral behaviour in Kenya. Clientelist networks do exist in Kenya, but my research is inconclusive as to the degree it affects electoral behaviour; detailed research is needed to draw any firm conclusion.

I would argue, however, that I found evidence that economic ideology and economic value orientations play a role in determining electoral behaviour in Kenya. This might still be hard to detect at times from just looking at electoral results. As historical injustices and perceptions of marginalisation have been strengthened among certain ethnic groups, ideology, economic values and ethnicity are reinforcing each other and leading to similar voting patterns.

When reviewing the *short-term factors*, my research further reveals that vote-buying is of little importance for electoral behaviour of Kenyans. Vote-buying is still a common practice at political meetings and rallies during election campaigns. Nevertheless, all my respondents stated that it had little significance for their actions as voters.

Retrospective voting, party leaders and political issues, on the other hand, seem to be important in determining Kenyan electoral behaviour. With regard to the prevalence of retrospective voting and ethnicity I found something interesting in Korogocho. My research indicates that Kenyans are inclined to disregard ethnicity as a significant parameter if their elected politicians actually deliver tangible results. Voting based on ethnic loyalties might be a sort of disillusioned last resort for many voters.

Party leaders and individuals are definitely very important in Kenya. It is, however, hard to determine if the leaders are important through the strength of their ethnic representation or their individual ideological beliefs.

Land reform and constitutional reform have been important issues throughout Kenya's post-independence history. Particularly *majimboism* or devolution of power has been a contagious political issue around elections, influencing Kenyan electoral behaviour. The issue of *majimboism* is either linked to ethnic cleansing or associated with the political value of economic equality and a leftist ideological leaning. This re-emphasises the intertwining of ethnicity and economic ideology in Kenyan politics.

## 6.2 Conclusion

The background for my thesis is in a broad sense my interest for Kenyan people and politics. More specifically it arose from the accounts of the post-election events in the international media in 2007/08. The image portrayed of a Kenyan population driven exclusively by ethnic grudges and loyalties did not correspond with my own past experience from working and living in the country. Although ethnicity is important for Kenyan electoral behaviour, it is by no means the only significant marker in Kenyan politics. I suspected that ethnicity serves more as an intermediate variable, influencing the underlying rationales for electoral behaviour, which are mostly economic variables. The basis of my thesis was, thus, the following preliminary hypothesis: Kenyan voting patterns overwhelmingly follow ethnic cleavages mainly because the voters believe their electoral choices will somehow benefit their economic interests, either as individuals or as communities.

My older respondents gave relatively blunt statements that directly supported this hypothesis. They vote ethnically primarily because they believe it will bring them economic benefits of some sort. The responses and statements of the remaining respondents were less uniform; some respondents stated that they had in fact not voted in accordance with their ethnic identity at all.

The younger respondents who confirm that they vote in accordance with their ethnic identity state other political reasons for their electoral choices. Analysing these responses, some rationales and theories of electoral behaviour are distinctly more

relevant than others. This is true for (i) ideology; (ii) economic values; (iii) issues; and (iv) retrospective voting, in particular. But reviewing this analysis, economic interests, especially at the community level, emerge as a common denominator across the board. The struggle for the control and distribution of resources through the state apparatus is fundamental for all these rationales, not just in the form of simplistic assumptions about reaping benefits through more or less corrupt preferential treatment, but also in the sense that political issues and dispute over the allocation and distribution of resources become significant for electoral choices. And, the political divisions related to these highlighted issues correlates well with the country's main ethnic divisions. It is my argument that this is what ultimately gives ethnicity its vital significance in the dynamics of Kenyan power politics and electoral behaviour.

Voters who have not been voting in accordance with their ethnic identities also give economic or ideological-economic reasons for their electoral behaviour. Two clear examples stand out; the Kalenjin from Uasin Gishu quoted in section 4.3.3, who cited ideology as a determining factor; and the young segment of respondents from Korogocho, regardless of ethnic affiliation, who all had voted for the new female Luo MP because they believed it would benefit their ethnically heterogeneous local community, rather than their narrow ethnic community.

If what my research suggests is indeed correct, the Kenyan population would seemingly be willing to put ethnic candidate preferences aside if they saw tangible results from their elected representatives, regardless of ethnicity. If these signals were, in turn, translated into political action by Kenyan politicians, through determination to deliver political action matching their electoral promises, they would perhaps in the process make a strong contribution to reducing ethnic tension and discord.

My research has indicated a voting pattern where ideological cleavages linked to economic policies coincide with ethnic cleavages. Adamantly concluding on the basis of the responses I got from my interviewees would not be justified. More data is required, as the respondents put forward differing reasons and rationales to explain this

*de facto* ethnic voting pattern. Nevertheless, I would argue that my findings give clear indications of ethnicity acting as an epiphenomenon.

The contours of a significant correlation between political cleavages and ethnicity have been made visible through my research and analysis. A considerable prevalence of relatively strong perceptions of marginalisation has been uncovered, owing largely to colonial injustices regarding distribution of land, and their reinforcement after independence. Voters from ethnic communities that share such perceptions of marginalisation state very clearly that issues pointing back to economic interests are decisive motivations for their electoral choices. Conversely, the motivations of voters representing ethnic communities perceived to have benefited from the unfair post-independent policies mirror those of their adversaries, especially with regard to private ownership and redistributionist policies. These conclusions are in line with Andreassen et al. (2008:65) who point out that ethnic loyalties act as a proxy for political cleavages of a different nature. They conclude that “Kenyan politics is of a dual nature: political cleavages other than ethnicity have emerged but interact to confirm the persistence of political ethnicity” (ibid).

## End note

For Kenyan politics to move out of the valley of the shadow of ethnic discord, this correlation will have to be unveiled and addressed. The Kenyan contemporary reality is that even though the prevalent perception of marginalisation may have roots in historical facts, the class differences or differences in economic well-being within each ethnic group is by any scale much bigger than those between ethnic groups. Unleashing the potential political momentum of an alliance based on such common socio-economic realities and interests would undoubtedly create new dynamics in Kenyan politics, but such a scenario does not seem likely in the near future as Kenya’s political and economic elite appears to master the politics of ethnicity skilfully.

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## List of Interviews

The interviews were conducted in August and September 2008, in Korogocho, Nairobi and Uasin Gishu district.

- Aug 26: Pax Washika, *Korogocho*
- Aug 27: Anne Nyaguthii Washira, *Korogocho*
- Aug 29: Khamis Ramadhan, *Korogocho*
- Aug 29: Abdi Hussein, *Korogocho*
- Aug 31: Nancy Wangari, *Korogocho*
- Sept 15: Francis K. Kamau, *Uasin Gishu*
- Sept 15: Mary Ndugu, *Uasin Gishu*
- Sept 15: Jackson Mwangi, *Uasin Gishu*
- Sept 15: Unice Chipchirchir Nyakundi, *Uasin Gishu*
- Sept 16: James Arap Tirof, *Uasin Gishu*
- Sept 16: Leonita Nteny, *Uasin Gishu*
- Sept: 16: Simon Kuria Gitau, *Uasin Gishu*
- Sept 17: Nicolas Musiuka, *Uasin Gishu*
- Sept 17: William Kipkorir Tuei, *Uasin Gishu*
- Sept 17: Mary Mwangi, *Uasin Gishu*
- Sept 23: Martin Owala, *Korogocho*
- Sept 23: Mbune Kinuthie, *Korogocho*
- Sept 24: Tom Mboya, *Korogocho*
- Sept 24: Mary Atieno, *Korogocho*
- Sept 25: Perres Amati, *Korogocho*

Members of the *focal group* discussion on September 18, *Uasin Gishu*:

Lucy Mwei, Nelly Koech, Benjamin K. Talam, Patrick W. Mwangi, Simon Ngige Mungai, Samuel Mwangi Kamau and Joseph Chumba.