ETHNICITY AND/OR ISSUES?
The 2013 General Elections in Western Kenya[1]

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ABSTRACT

*It is often assumed that Kenyans vote on the basis of ethnic identification
rather than the socio-economic and political issues affecting their lives.
However, experience from earlier elections shows that issues and interests
are important drivers in giving form and expression to identity politics.
This article examines the interaction between ethnic identification and issue
differentiation in the March 2013 general elections in Western Kenya by
identifying factors that influenced the outcomes in the six simultaneous
elections. The article is based on observation, interviews and data collected
in a survey of four constituencies inhabited by Luo- and Luyia-speaking
people in Western Kenya during the campaign period and immediately*

after the elections. The study suggests that while constituencies may have voted as a bloc along ethnic identification lines – especially with respect to national politics and the presidential election – their choices were also differentiated and informed by specific issues, especially at the county and constituency levels.

Ethnicity is a key factor in Kenya's political culture and democratic development. This is true of electoral behaviour and of everyday negotiations and conflicts. Nobody wanting to understand Kenya's modern history can neglect the significance of ethnic belonging. In the 2013 general elections ethnicity unfolded dramatically at the national level when the Jubilee Coalition brought together communities that had previously been at each other's throats, the Kikuyu and the Kalenjin, and when the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) sought alliances, most importantly with the large Luyia community, in the Coalition for Reforms and Democracy (CORD).

The narrow victory by Jubilee leaders under Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto meant that the Luo- and Luyia-speaking constituencies were once again defeated in their reach for the leadership of the nation. At local levels there was also elite competition and politicisation of ethnicity, however, when it came to voting for political representatives at county level, the administrative unit resulting from devolution under the new 2010 Constitution, issues more narrowly connected to development, the local economy and previous political performance figured more prominently and led to more differentiated patterns of voting behaviour. How can the entanglement of issues, interests and identity in the outcome of the first general election after the introduction of the 2010 Constitution be unravelled?

Arguing against a simplistic understanding of 'ethnicity' and 'tribalism' in their analysis of the 1997 elections, Cowen & Kanyinga (2002, p 133) noted that 'in so far as communal politics do enter into explanations of electoral outcomes they do so as part of something else'. In their discussion of the relationship between identity and interest in Kenyan elections, Bratton & Kimenyi (2008, p 287) concluded from a representative survey undertaken before the 2007 elections that 'voting in Kenya is … defensively and fundamentally an ethnic census'. They also noted, however, that, as in Western democracies, policy and government performance matter. In this article we seek to take this argument further and, focusing on a selection of rural constituencies in Western Kenya, we show how considerations of ethnic belonging and of interests and issues interacted with each other in the March 2013 election.

The 2013 general elections, which required voters to elect no fewer than six representatives in each constituency, promised to provide a rare opportunity to analyse more systematically the factors that influence election outcomes and to

seek nuanced explanations of electoral behaviour in rural Kenya. As it happened, this opportunity was difficult to pursue, as the reporting of results broke down, and the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) was only able to provide detailed results at all six levels of the elections after considerable delay, which was unfortunate from all points of view. Comprehensive coverage of a number of important aspects of these elections is found in a special issue of the *Journal of Eastern African Studies* (8(1), 2014), which includes an important overview article by Cheeseman, Lynch & Willis as well as, *inter alia*, articles closer to our topic (Cornell & D'Arcy 2014; Carrier & Kochore 2014).

But before we begin to discuss voting patterns and motivation in the March 2013 elections in Western Kenya we should trace some of the lines along which ethnicity and politics in Kenya have previously been discussed.

ETHNICITY AND ELECTORAL POLITICS IN KENYA

The academic debate about ethnicity, politics and democracy in Kenya is rich and varied. In contrast to popular usage, there is little primordialism in the debate. There is also little by way of crude and dualistic use of modernisation theory or direct and simplistic identification of ethnicity with rural identity politics. There are, however, in some instances, echoes of Horowitz's general assumptions of identification between urbanity and cosmopolitanism and Mamdani's contrasting of urban citizens with rural tribalists (Horowitz 1985, pp 96ff; Mamdani 1996, p 18). There has been a stronger impact from constructionist arguments like that of John Lonsdale, setting histories of 'moral ethnicity' against forms of 'political tribalism', as well as from historical anthropological approaches like that of Cohen & Odhiambo (Lonsdale 1994; Cohen & Odhiambo 1989). In this view tribalism is not traditionalist, but modern – constantly re-invented, flexible and adaptable to a variety of instrumental uses.

In the post-1992 Kenyan elections literature inspiration from both Mamdani (1996) and Lonsdale (1994) is explicit in the writings of Klopp (2001; 2002) on Masaai-Kikuyu clashes in Narok in 1991-92 and violence in the Rift Valley in 1998. From this perspective, structures of rural authoritarianism and histories of displacement can be exploited from above by modern and urban-based politicians as exemplified by Moi's use of *Majimboism* to establish bastions of hegemony to counter the effects of multiparty elections after 1992. Lonsdale also informed the work of Lynch on ethnicity and politics in the Rift Valley and around Mount Elgon. Lynch (2006) underlined the flexibility and adaptability of ethnic identities as instruments that can be used differently by 'big' politicians and power brokers as well as by local groupings staking claims in struggles over land and other scarce resources.

The 'political tribalism' perspective was expanded by Cowen & Kanyinga (2002, p 169ff) in their argument that 'tribalism' operates both from above and from below, with the opportunist 'elite circulation' of politicians seeking power being matched by the communalist and 'territorial' strivings for delivery of development products. Cheeseman's work on the significance of coalitions for election outcomes also fits into this perspective, which explained the tribalist outcomes of coalitions in the form of vote banks and ethnic blocs (Cheeseman 2008). Such dynamics were convincingly demonstrated to be important in the context of presidential elections, but it was not clear how coalitions worked themselves out at lower election levels. This is one of the issues we examine in this article.

In a study of the 2007 elections Gibson & Long (2009, p 499) analysed the importance of 'swing groups' in Kenyan elections using the example of the Kalenjin and Luyia communities. They argued that

> [e]thnicity … remained relevant to the election. Both Kibaki's and Odinga's coalitions actively sought votes beyond their *Kikuyu* and *Luo* base to appeal to Kenya's many swing groups. High profile leaders from the same ethnic groups joined both parties, making it difficult to predict votes based on ethnicity alone. For example, Kibaki, Odinga and Musyoka all chose members of the *Abaluyia* community as vice-presidential candidates.

MacArthur (2008, p 228) dug deeper into the functioning of the 2007 ODM election campaign among the Luyia-speakers of Western Province, who downplayed ethnicity in favour of 'regional issues of resource distribution and equitable development and the national concerns of constitutional reforms and power-sharing'. At the same time, appeals were made to the 1960s prophecies by Elijah Masinde that 'a Luo president was the necessary precondition for the ascendancy of Luyia leadership in the country' (On the Prophet's joining the Kenya African National Union – Kanu – in 1962, see also Simiyu 1996, pp 28ff). Thus, even with the focus on issues, appeals were made to the Luyia to come together as an ethnic voting bloc. Such attempts seem to have been continued in the campaign of Mudavadi and the Amani coalition in the 2013 elections. A key question here is thus the extent to which the Luyia this time around succumbed to the pressure to vote as an ethnic bloc for 'their own' presidential candidate.

Finally, the contribution by Bratton & Kimenyi – also from the special issue of the *Journal of Eastern African Studies* on the 2007 elections – provides us with a set of direct findings and hypotheses on ethnicity, politics and democratisation with which to engage. Bratton & Kimenyi examined the extent to which the 2007 elections were characterised primarily by either 'ethnic' or 'policy voting'. An

important finding was that in their self-understanding only 20% of respondents would see their primary identity as 'ethnic', while 37% would see it as 'Kenyan' and 43% as 'non-ethnic'.

At the same time, they found that 'Kenyans also regard ethnicity as a source of political and economic division' and that especially those with a Luo or Luyia background would feel themselves exposed to 'ethnically based discrimination' by the central government. The analysis of the 2007 elections as an 'ethnic census' therefore needed to be supplemented by one of 'policy issues' to explain patterns of voting. When contrasting different groups of voters, Bratton & Kimenyi (2008, pp 274f, 277, 287 and 288) found that 'ethnicity' was more significant for 'homebodies' than for 'migrants', but not more significant for rural than for urban voters. They therefore concluded that 'further social structural change, including greater contact and integration among ethnic groups', would eventually bring policy issues to overrule ethnic concerns in deciding voting patterns. In the present article we try to examine to what extent this resonates with the results of the 2013 elections in Western Kenya.

THE STUDY UNDERTAKEN

This article uses primary data collected through a limited exploratory survey of voting patterns and motivations carried out in Western Kenya in February and March 2013. The study was confined to the administrative regions of former Western and Nyanza provinces inhabited by Luo- and Luyia-speakers. As a kind of pilot study, these two communities and a selection of administrative areas within them were purposively sampled without any pretention to full representivity. The aim was to get an impression of and compare not just the influence of the two ethnic identities on electoral outcomes, but also the persistence of what has, since independence, been a seemingly more homogenous political affiliation among the Luo than the more heterogeneous one among the Luyia (MacArthur 2008, p 230). This exploratory investigation is intended to give depth and perspective to a discussion of the results of the six simultaneous elections in the selected constituencies.

The choice of the two communities and the area was also informed by the fact that they both had presidential candidates in the 2013 general elections. From among the Luo-speakers, Raila Odinga was contesting the presidency on the ODM ticket, while Luyia-speaker Musalia Mudavadi was vying for the presidency on behalf of the United Democratic Front (UDF). Given the centrality of the presidency in Kenyan politics, it was expected that this would polarise the two communities in support of their own candidates, thereby illustrating the overriding significance of ethnicity for electoral outcomes in Western Kenya.

Following the structure of the new system of government, the former Western province is now administratively divided into four counties, as is the Luo-speaking region of the former Nyanza province. Two counties from each of the former provinces were sampled for the study, one being where the presidential candidate came from, the other a random choice located further away from the presidential candidate's county. This gave us Siaya and Vihiga as the two presidential candidates' counties, and Homa Bay and Busia as the counties furthest removed from the presidential candidates' homes.

One constituency from each of the selected counties was randomly sampled for the study. This gave us Ugenya, Sabatia, Ndhiwa and Funyula constituencies. Going further down the electoral levels, two County Representative wards from each of the sampled constituencies were randomly sampled to constitute the study area. The four constituencies and eight wards sampled are summarised in Table 1. It should be pointed out again here that this study area may not be representative of Western Kenya, but it is sufficient to provide some insight into the factors that informed choices in the region in these elections.

Table 1
Electoral Units Sampled

County	Constituency	Region	County Rep wards
Siaya	Ugenya	Nyanza	Ukwala
			North Ugenya
Homa Bay	Ndhiwa		Kabuoch North
			Kanyikela
Vihiga	Sabatia	Western	Chavakali
			West Sabatia
Busia	Funyula		Nangina
			Namboboto/Nambuku

Twenty opinion leaders, five from each constituency, purposively sampled on the basis of their perceived knowledge of local politics, were interviewed during the political parties' primaries and the campaign period of the general elections. After the elections 25 voters were sampled from each ward, using a simple random sampling method, yielding a sample of 200 respondents. A semi-structured questionnaire was used for the interviews. Thus, 220 respondents from the study area were interviewed to generate the qualitative and quantitative data that inform our discussion.

This was supplemented by observation in person by authors and research assistants of primary elections in some of the constituencies. While the sample is limited and may not be sufficiently representative of constituencies in Nyanza and Western provinces, the combination of observation, newspaper reports, interviews with key informants and a survey based on random sampling gives us important insights that might inform the direction of further research and put existing studies into perspective.

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

Western Kenya is home to people from diverse social backgrounds. Though Luo-speakers are predominant in the former Nyanza province, there are also Gusii, Kuria and Suba communities in the region. Similarly, while Luyia-speakers are predominant in the former Western province, there are also Teso and Sabaot communities. Whereas the structural bases of social organisation among Luo and Luyia are similar and the clan, structured on strong patrilineal kinship ties, is the highest level of social organisation, there are no sub-ethnic groups among the Luo. There are, however, 17 sub-ethnic groups among the Luyia, consisting of clans that share the same dialect, but have diverse origins as well as social and political organisation (Were 1967; Fedders & Salvadori 1979).

Economically, there are three main activities in the region: agriculture, fishing and commerce. Agriculture is the main activity, though farming is largely subsistence in the lowlands surrounding the lake following the collapse of cotton production in the 1990s. Sugarcane is the only surviving cash crop, but returns from the crop have been dwindling due to poor marketing channels. Fishing has been the main source of income around the lake region, though the fish catch and the income it produces have diminished over the years. With members of the Asian community dominating large commercial activities, the majority of the people have turned to small-scale enterprises as a survival mechanism. The economic situation is aggravated by the lack of industries to provide employment opportunities, which has increased migration to urban areas in search of wage employment. In the midst of a poor socio-economic infrastructure characterised by few and inadequately equipped hospitals and health centres, poor schools and colleges, lack of clean water and poor roads, the economic situation has created serious development challenges for the region. An outline of prominent issues of contestation and concern can be found in the profiles of the four counties published by the *Daily Nation* newspaper on 13 December 2012 (Vihiga), 15 December 2012 (Siaya), 12 January 2013 (Busia), and 17 January 2013 (Homa Bay).

Though Luo- and Luyia-speakers share socio-economic challenges, their responses in the form of political organisation have been different. Luyia-speakers

have been struggling to solve these challenges by forging diverse political affiliations and choosing alternative leaders who could address them. This has perhaps been aided by the fact that Luyia-speakers were not a homogeneous political entity, for there was never a central authority. There was collective authority in each clan, which jealously guarded its independence and sovereignty to such an extent that, in reality, every major clan was a sovereign state.

This form of political organisation arguably contained a high degree of freedom and independence, which might have been extended to the political orientations of Luyia-speakers since independence (Katumanga 2001, pp 513-525). Consequently, Luyia-speakers have tended to be politically heterogeneous and relatively 'liberal' in their political affiliation.

Conversely, Luo-speakers have largely been politically homogeneous, but this is a recent development. Like the Luyia, Luo-speakers did not traditionally have a central authority. They had a segmented political formation, consisting of heterogeneous lineages and clans, with each clan having its own political, social and economic organisations. Even the state formation initiatives in the 19th century that culminated into the emergence of chieftains in places like Ugenya, Yimbo and Kano did not establish truly centralised power (Ochieng 1974, p 47).

A characteristic feature of the emerging chieftainships was egalitarianism, a system that advocated social justice and equal rights. Accordingly, in a later phase, when Oginga Odinga stood up against colonialism, created the Luo Thrift and Trading Corporation and opposed European authoritarian control over the aspirations of Africans, Luo-speakers would acknowledge his leadership and embrace him as their leader.

During his period as the country's first vice-president, Oginga's agitation for reforms to enhance social protection and justice for all served to enhance support among Luo-speakers for his leadership. When he was forced to resign from government due to his ideological stand, and formed the Kenya People's Union (KPU) in 1966, the Luo shifted their party affiliation from Kanu to KPU. The assassination of Tom Mboya in 1969 solidified Luo political allegiance to Oginga Odinga as a way of protecting themselves from a predatory state – seen as based on a negative mobilisation of ethnic power – that was excluding Luos, not just from political power but also from the distribution of state resources for development. Luo voters would move with Oginga into opposition politics in 1992 and this loyalty would be transferred to his son, Raila Odinga, following the demise of Oginga in 1994.

Consequently – in their own understanding – the apparently homogeneous political affiliation of Luo-speaking voters has been an effort to resist a repressive state that has not just restricted their freedom and rights but has also denied them development resources and social protection. Here again, Luo-speakers have

not been too different from the Luyia, where – according to MacArthur (2008, p 231) – in 'the 2007 election, as in 2002, what united a majority of Luyia voters was not necessarily calls to ethnic solidarity, but rather a deep desire to challenge the current political system'. Thus, as Lesa Morrison (2007, p 120) argues, while the discourse of being victimised, of being a 'fallen elite group' disadvantaged and discriminated against in terms of development, may not be an accurate representation of the development history of the Luo, it has served as a strong ideology and has contributed to uniting the political allegiance of the community.

THE 2013 ELECTIONS IN WESTERN KENYA

Political parties and coalitions

The requirement for a competitive election is the existence of more than one political party competing to form and control the government. Such parties are expected to aggregate people's views into coherent policies and then facilitate their choice of alternative policies and representatives in the government. To assess awareness of the political parties that competed in the elections in Western Kenya we asked our respondents to name the political parties and political coalitions in the region, which many of them could. The main political parties and coalitions in the two communities during the 2013 elections are shown in Table 2.

What is interesting is that there were more political parties and coalitions in the Luyia constituencies than among the Luo. All three dominant political coalitions in the 2013 general elections, CORD, Amani and Jubilee, competed for the votes of Luyia-speakers, but only CORD and, to a small extent, Jubilee, were represented in the Luo counties. Among the Luyia there was also a more marked presence of political parties not allied to any coalition than among the Luo. This might indicate that Luyia voters continue to be more liberal and pluralism-inclined than their Luo neighbours.

However, the presence of several political parties among the Luo in the 2013 general elections was a significant departure from past elections, as the ODM, for the first time since its formation in 2007, was competing with other parties in its own territory. Indeed, Luo Nyanza had all along been a preserve of changing dominant parties since the re-introduction of multiparty politics in 1992. Nevertheless, the competition ODM faced was a function of the political realignments in the run-up to the election that forced Odinga to craft CORD.

Most of the political parties, however, were not founded on the basis of any discernible ideology or philosophy but on the individual ambitions of leaders aspiring to power. For instance, Mudavadi joined the UDF only in December 2012 after his disagreement with Odinga over the procedure for nominating the presidential candidate. Ideological differences did not inform this move.

Similarly, the creation of coalitions was based solely on the political survival of the leaders. The CORD brought together Odinga and Kalonzo Musyoka, of the Wiper Democratic Movement (WDM), who have never shared a political vision. Similarly, the Mudavadi-led Amani coalition was only formed after its leader failed to find accommodation in the Jubilee alliance that evolved around Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto. Subsequently, the parties and coalitions ended up coalescing around the personality and perceived ethnic and/or regional support of their leaders.

Table 2
Main Political Parties and Coalitions in Western Kenya

Community	Political Coalitions	Political Parties
Luo	Coalition for Reforms and Democracy (CORD)	Orange Democratic Movement (ODM)
		FORD - Kenya
		Wiper Democratic Movement (WDM)
		Federal Party of Kenya (FPK)
		National Agenda Party of Kenya (NAPK)
		People's Democratic Party (PDP)
	Jubilee Coalition	The National Alliance (TNA)
	N/A (Independent parties)	Kenya National Congress
		Labor Party of Kenya (LPK)
Community	**Political Coalitions**	**Political Parties**
Abaluyia	Amani Coalition	United Democratic Front (UDF)
		New FORD Kenya
	Coalition for Reforms and Democracy (CORD)	Orange Democratic Movement (ODM)
		FORD - Kenya
		Federal Party of Kenya (FPK)
	Jubilee Coalition	The National Alliance (TNA)
		United Republican Party (URP)
	N/A (Independent parties)	Labour Party of Kenya (LPK)
		Progressive Party of Kenya (PPK)
		Safina
		Restore and Build Kenya Party (RBKP)
		National Vision Party of Kenya (NVPK)

Source: Field data

The political parties also did not have formally registered members. This was not unique to parties in Western Kenya, as virtually no party in the country has registered members (Oloo 2007, pp 100-103). The tendency has been to assume that people from the ethnic group and region from which the party leader comes support the party in question. Indeed, some political parties command a large following from the regions from which their leaders come due to either the ethnic identity of the leader or political patronage, where 'members' are paid to vote for the patron. With such support bases, party leaders have ignored the need for party membership and personalised party activities to serve their own interests (Wanyama 2010, p 91).

Without registered members political parties had difficulties in performing their functions. For instance, most of them had not conducted internal elections and had not established elaborate structures of officials and delegates to link the national level to the grassroots. Secondly, their structural weaknesses denied them the ability to aggregate people's interests into policy issues to inform their campaigns. This became apparent in the haphazardly drafted manifestos that tended to enhance the posture of the party leader rather than the issues the party actually stood for. For instance, the UDF only publicised its manifesto one week into the campaign period, emphasising that Mudavadi was a moderate compared to Odinga and Kenyatta, who might plunge the country into violence. Even at the end of the campaign period it was not clear what socio-economic policies the UDF and the Amani coalition were advancing.

Political party primaries

Since the re-introduction of multiparty politics in 1992, party nomination processes have been marked by intimidation of candidates, massive bribery, violence and outright rigging in favour of particular candidates. In the 1997 elections, for example, all party nominations were reported to have been marred by administrative and structural malpractices: vote buying, violence and the imposition of losing candidates on the electorate by the party bosses (Oloo 2007, pp 108-110). The scenario recurred in 2002, particularly in the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) nominations, which attracted thousands of candidates, resulting in widespread violence. Unfortunately, these malpractices were largely repeated in the 2007 elections (Wanyama 2010, p 75).

The Elections Act of 2012 and the Political Parties Act of 2011 significantly changed the way political parties and coalitions would nominate their candidates for the 2013 elections. The provision for pre-election coalitions saw the leading parties form alliances with the intention of carving out ethno-regional voting blocs for themselves. Consequently, virtually all leaders of parties faced no challenge in

the nominations for the presidential election. So, Odinga was the unchallenged candidate for the ODM and Mudavadi for the UDF. Thereafter, the presidential candidates embarked on weaving coalitions that could win the elections.

It was in these circumstances that CORD emerged to support Odinga's presidential campaign. Among the key political parties in the alliance were Kalonzo Musyoka's WDM, Moses Wetangula's FORD-Kenya, Omingo Magara's People's Democratic Party (PDP), Cyrus Jirongo's Federal Party of Kenya (FPK) and other smaller political parties. Having been ejected from the Jubilee alliance in the closing week of the period for forming pre-election coalitions, Mudavadi entered the fray to assemble the Amani coalition that brought together his own UDF, Eugene Wamalwa's New FORD-Kenya and Gideon Moi's Kanu. With these two coalitions presenting the region's presidential candidates, the spotlight within the parties turned on the nomination of candidates for the other seats. The fledgling structures of the leading political parties in Western Kenya, particularly ODM, UDF, and FORD-Kenya, created election boards at party headquarters in Nairobi to manage the primaries.

The election boards established the requirements of candidates for respective seats. These were basically the party's nomination fees and compliance with the provisions of the Elections Act 2012. Thereafter, the boards had to deal with the requirements for voters in the primaries. Since the parties did not have registered members, virtually all of them qualified any person registered as a voter in a constituency to be eligible to participate in the primaries. Consequently, to vote in any party's nomination process one was required merely to present a national identity card and evidence of registration as a voter by the IEBC.

This laid the ground for 'free-for-all' primaries, made them too huge to manage and opened up the possibility of people participating in the primaries of more than one party. The problem was particularly marked in the respective strongholds of the presidential candidates' parties where it was assumed that the parliamentary (both houses), gubernatorial and county assembly representative aspirants nominated by the party within his stronghold would almost be guaranteed to win their respective elections.

In order to reduce the chances of losers defecting from one party to another, all parties held their primaries on 15 January 2013, two days prior to the deadline IEBC had set for completion of the primaries. With every person being an eligible voter in the primaries and the nominations taking place on the same day in all 290 constituencies for five elective seats (senator, governor, woman member of Parliament, member of Parliament and County Assembly ward representative), logistical and management problems marred the secret ballot method that virtually all parties were using. The result was frequent anarchic and chaotic

scenes, sometimes including the outbreak of violence, as observed at first hand in the Homa Bay and Siaya constituencies.

One problem was the supply of voting materials. Few parties had the capacity to produce and distribute voting materials to all constituencies in time. In places where prepared voting materials did not arrive, people improvised. For ballot boxes they used adhesive-taped plastic waste buckets, food containers and cartons. For ballot papers the 32-page exercise books used in primary schools were on hand. Where such improvisation was delayed, voters waited for hours, with the result that some were not able to vote or voting was postponed for several days. Some candidates, occasionally in collusion with polling officials, capitalised on logistical problems to hijack ballot papers for use in rigging the elections. For instance, in Homa Bay County there were reports of ballot papers found on the streets marked in favour of one of the candidates for the Senate seat.

Logistical problems also arose with the appointment and allocation of polling officials to the voting centres. In some constituencies ODM nominations had to be delayed due to parallel lists of presiding officers being circulated. Some polling officers reached their polling centres very late, while others failed to show up, forcing postponement of the nominations to the next day. There were also a number of management problems. In some cases ballot papers were not adequate, while in others some candidates' names were missing from the ballot papers. Then there were cases where voting started late in the day and had to continue into the night. In some cases voting had to be postponed to the next day, yet there were no arrangements for safeguarding the ballots that had already been cast. In some cases where voting was postponed to the next day, the presiding officers did not reappear to continue with the process.

Another management problem related to the counting and tallying of the votes. In some cases, the ballot boxes and the returning officers were kidnapped and taken to undesignated places to tally the votes and announce particular candidates as the winners. This was the case with the FORD-Kenya primaries for the Funyula constituency seat. As our research assistant was able to observe directly, the returning officer was commandeered to a remote pub, from which he announced one of the candidates as the winner without including vote tallies from some polling stations where the candidate was said to have received the fewest votes.

Furthermore, the results of the ODM primaries in most constituencies were never declared. The reason was that either voting had been prematurely terminated due to logistical problems or the presiding officers did not have the opportunity to count and tally the results. Thus, whereas some people were still waiting to vote, others were waiting for the declaration of the results from the ODM Elections Board. In the meantime, ever-changing lists of preferred nominees

that went contrary to the expectations of many voters were being generated at the party's headquarters. The anxiety that resulted from these incidents led to the outbreak of violence in Homa Bay and Siaya counties.

The shambolic primaries occasioned a fall-out within the ODM, not only between the leadership of the party and the losing candidates, but also between the party and the electorate. The latter were particularly interested in making their choice in the primaries of the dominant party in the region because they had learnt from the past that it was the primaries that determined the actual winners in the general elections. When they were denied a chance to vote or even have their votes determine the nominees for the seats, many resigned from the electoral process and some vowed not to participate in the general elections. This would force Odinga to campaign in the region to mend fences, which he had never done in previous elections. With such chaos, manipulations, violence and rigging in the primaries, those who failed to secure the tickets of their preferred party defected to minor political parties to pursue their ambitions. Those in the ODM decamped to join smaller parties in the CORD coalition.

The results of the 2013 general elections in Western Kenya

If the view that electoral outcomes tend to be an 'ethnic census' holds for Western Kenya, then the expectation would be that the Luo would vote to the last man for Odinga in the presidential election, while the Luyia would vote overwhelmingly for Mudavadi. However, the results of the 2013 presidential elections reveal a more mixed pattern of voting behaviour. Table 3 presents the results for Odinga and Mudavadi in all eight counties dominated by Luo- and Luyia-speaking voters.

Table 3
Presidential Election Results for Candidates from Western Kenya

Ethnic group	County	Odinga %	Mudavadi %	Others %
Luyia	Kakamega	64	30	6
	Vihiga	46	49	5
	Bungoma	53	31	16
	Busia	86	8	6
Luo	Siaya	98	0	2
	Kisumu	97	1	2
	Homa Bay	99	0	1
	Migori	86	2	12

Source: Compiled from IEBC data

Table 3 shows that Odinga performed better than Mudavadi in three of four Luyia counties. Even in Vihiga County, where he comes from, Mudavadi beat Odinga by only 3%. This seems to disprove the thesis that voting in rural Kenya is merely an ethnic census. The possibility that voting is also influenced by issues would perhaps explain why more Abaluyia voted for Odinga than for Mudavadi who is 'their own'. Voting might also have been influenced by common-sense considerations of Mudavadi's limited chances of success, which strengthens the argument that the Luyia were weighing the issues on which they were likely to lose by voting for Mudavadi. By contrast, an examination of the results from the Luo counties seems to support the ethnic census argument as it is evident that the Luo voted overwhelmingly for Odinga.

The relatively lower level of ethnic voting among the Luyia than among the Luo is apparent in the gubernatorial results in the counties under scrutiny here, as seen when Tables 4 and 5 are compared.

Table 4
Gubernatorial Election Results for Vihiga and Busia Counties

County	Candidate	Political Party	Votes	%
Vihiga	Moses Akaranga	PPK	58 543	35.6
	Kennedy E. Butiko	ODM	57 096	34.7
	Jairus B. Amayi	UDF	37 873	23.0
	Reuben Kigame	RBKP	4 880	3.0
	Francis Mwanga	NAPK	3 160	1.9
	Justus I. Mwanje	FORD-Kenya	2 887	1.8
	Total		**164 439**	**100.0**
Busia	Sospeters Ojaamongson	ODM	117 078	53.5
	Vincent Sidai	UDF	74 670	34.1
	Philemon L. Imo	FORD-Kenya	12 766	5.8
	Alice B. Were	LPK	11 212	5.1
	Benjamin Okwara	Safina	3 236	1.5
	Total		**218 962**	**100.0**

Source: IEBC

Conventionally, 'ethnic census' voting presupposes that voters are tied to their presidential candidate by virtue of ethnic identity. The implication is, then, that voters will vote more or less as a bloc for the candidates running on behalf of the presidential candidate's party. However, data in Table 4 show a different picture:

Mudavadi's UDF did not perform well in either of the two counties. Indeed, the ODM performed markedly better, winning the seat in Busia and coming close to winning in Vihiga. Thus, it seems that the Luyia were not solely motivated by ethnic identity.

The voting pattern among the Luo, however, seems to have been significantly influenced by ethnic identity, as seen in Table 5, which shows the results of the gubernatorial contests in Siaya and Homa Bay.

Table 5
Gubernatorial Election Results for Homa Bay and Siaya Counties

County	Candidate	Political Party	Votes	%
Homa Bay	Cyprian Otieno Awiti	ODM	295 657	97.3
	Benson Owiti Odhiambo	TNA	5 257	1.7
	Philip O. Auko	Independent	2 925	1.0
	Total		**303 839**	**100.0**
Siaya	Cornel Rasanga Amoth	ODM	138 908	49.3
	William O. Oduol	NAPK	135 413	48.2
	Abong'o Malik Obama	Independent	2 814	1.0
	Nellie Okwiri	FPK	2 297	0.8
	Noah M. Winja	Independent	1 262	0.4
	Thomas P. M. Okore	KNC	969	0.3
	Total		**281 663**	**100.0**

Source: IEBC

Whereas the ODM won 97% of the vote in Homa Bay, in Siaya it had to share another 97% with the NAPK. Given that the ODM and the NAPK were both affiliates of CORD, we argue that there was bloc voting in Siaya to support Odinga (see also Tables 3 and 6). This is particularly the case because William Oduol stood for this seat in the ODM primaries and only defected to NAPK when he was voted out in an allegedly rigged process during the chaotic primaries. Nevertheless, Oduol almost caused an even split among CORD supporters in the gubernatorial race, which suggests that the votes in Siaya – and probably also Luo voters elsewhere – reflected underlying issues.

Parliamentary results also revealed quite differentiated voting patterns in the region. Table 6 shows the results of the two parliamentary seats contested at county level, that is, the senator and the women representative in the National Assembly.

Table 6
Votes for Key Parties in Presidential, Senatorial and Women MP
Elections in Selected Counties in Western Kenya

County	Party	President	Senator	Woman MP
Vihiga	ODM	77 825	33 022	51 907
	UDF(P)	82 426	112 816	37 733
	PPK	-	10 755	23 810
	FPK	-	-	22 721
	TNA	2 542	6 474	2 542
	Others		-	25 190
	Valid Votes	165 494	163 067	163 903
	Rejected votes	2 079	3 814	3 448
	Total votes	167 573	166 881	167 351
	Turnout (%)	83	82	83

County	Party	President	Senator	Woman MP
Busia	ODM	189 161	146 828	84 502
	UDF(P)	18 608	-	43 328
	Ford-Kenya	-	59 413	28 470
	LPK	-	-	53 253
	TNA	8 186	-	-
	Others	2 701	10 298	6 594
	Valid Votes	218 656	216 539	216 147
	Rejected votes	2.272	-	4 570
	Total votes	220 928	216 539	220 717
	Turnout (%)	88	88	88

County	Party	President	Senator	Woman MP
Siaya	ODM	284 031	269 253	239 242
	UDF(P)	713	-	-
	NAPK	-	-	33 769
	TNA	884	-	2 474
	Others	1 084	16 894	8 138
	Valid Votes	286 712	286 147	283 623
	Rejected votes	1 735	2 441	2 514
	Total votes	288 447	288 588	286 137
	Turnout (%)	92	92	92

County	Party	President	Senator	Woman MP
Siaya	ODM	303 447	232 601	298 623
	UDF(P)	557	-	-
	TNA	725	-	4 894
	PDP	-	59 508	-
	Others	937	6 869	-
	Valid Votes	305 666	298 978	303 517
	Rejected votes	1 054	2 470	2 100
	Total votes	306 720	301 448	305 617
	Turnout (%)	94	93	94

Source: IEBC

Table 6 shows that the turnout for the different elections was almost identical across the various offices, which demonstrates that the voters wanted to participate in the elections at all levels, including the election of the woman representative. Whereas the ODM won all the seats in the two counties occupied by the Luo, Mudavadi's UDF only won the senate seat in his own Vihiga County. The rest of the seats in the Luyia counties went to the ODM. This demonstrates that the Luyia voters were not simply trying to support their own presidential candidate.

Indeed, the very different numbers of votes cast for candidates of different parties in the three races demonstrate that voters – for whatever reason – were able to differentiate between the casting of a vote for a presidential candidate and the casting of a vote for a senator or a woman MP. Voting in Vihiga County is a particular case in point as the different support levels for the parties point to complicated voting decisions for all contests, not least for senator and woman MP.

At the constituency and county ward levels divergent voting patterns continued to manifest themselves among the Luyia, with some differentiation occurring among the Luo, especially at the county ward level. Table 7 shows the political parties that won the parliamentary and county assembly ward elections in the four constituencies we are studying here.

As was the case in the other sets of elections, the Luyia in Busia opted in the parliamentary election to vote for candidates from the ODM rather than from Mudavadi's UDF. Mudavadi once again drew support from his own constituency of Sabatia. The Luo remained true to the ethnic census voting pattern by electing ODM candidates in these two constituencies. Nevertheless, there was a differentiation in voting patterns at the County Assembly ward level.

Luo voters did not necessarily vote a straight ticket or 'the six-piece voting suit', as it was called. Just as candidates from other smaller parties won seats in ODM strongholds, the UDF lost one ward in its stronghold to another a CORD-affiliated party.

Table 7
Parties that Won National Assembly and County Assembly Ward
Seats in Selected Counties

County	Constituency	Party	County ward	Party
Vihiga	Sabatia	UDF	West Sabatia	UDF
			Wodanga	UDF
			North Maragoli	UDF
			Lyaduywa/Izava	UDF
			Mungoma	UDF
			Lugaga-Wamuluma	FORD-K
			South Maragoli	UDF
			Central Maragoli	UDF
			Chavakali	UDF
Busia	Funyula	ODM	Namboboto/Nambuku	LPK
			Bwiri	ODM
			Ageng'a/Nanguba	LPK
			Nangina	ODM
Siaya	Ugenya	ODM	Ukwala	ODM
			West Ugenya	ODM
			East Ugenya	ODM
			North Ugenya	ODM
Homa Bay	Ndhiwa	ODM	Kanyikela	LPK
			Kanyamwa Kosewe	ODM
			Kanyamwa Kologi	LPK
			Kanyadoto	LPK
			Kwabwai	ODM
			Kabuoch South/Pala	ODM
			Kabuoch North	ODM

Source: IEBC

Thus, voting patterns in the county ward representative elections – where more candidates are known personally by many voters – might have been informed by diverse factors. Ethnicity, issues, and perceived or real candidate competencies might have interacted with social pressure in many different ways.

On the whole, the results of the six elections in Western Kenya show that there was a certain tendency among voters to vote in a way that might seem to have been determined by ethnicity. This was particularly so for Luo voters, but we should certainly also take note of the dissenting voices among the Luo who voted for candidates sponsored by other parties. For instance, the ODM failed to win parliamentary seats in Alego-Usonga, Kisumu West, Muhoroni, and Awendo, all of which are Luo-dominated constituencies. Luyia-speakers also certainly

did not vote as a bloc, despite the fact that they had their own candidate in the presidential race, albeit with a slim chance of winning, but aspiring to a position from where inclusion in the next government might be negotiated.

This may suggest that issues – and perceptions of candidate competency – competed with considerations of ethnic affiliation as important factors in decisions about how to vote. In the following section we discuss what the balance was between identity politics and issues in the motivations for voting in 2013 in Western Kenya.

EXPLAINING THE RESULTS OF THE 2013 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN WESTERN KENYA

We asked respondents to give the most important reason why they voted for a candidate in each of the five elective seats we were looking at. Such questions are asked in most voter surveys, even though the direction of causality remains a contentious issue: Did the voter actually vote as she or he did for the reasons given as response to the question or did she or he give the answer we received because she or he felt it was socially acceptable? Voters who vote for a person because of ethnic considerations might feel that that is not a good enough reason and answer that they did so because of the policies advocated by the candidate.

Attempts to negotiate these intricacies require many more questions, more respondents, and more sophisticated analytical techniques than have been available to us. We are aware of the methodological challenges but feel nevertheless that the study can function as a kind of pilot study, where nothing else is available. The responses to the question of why respondents voted for the candidates at the various levels are summarised in Table 8.

Table 8
Reasons for Voting for the Various Candidates
%

Main Reason	President	Governor	Senator	Member of National Assembly	County Assembly Representative
Issues	83	46	2	62	60
Candidate qualities	3	44	82	19	14
Party popularity	-	6	11	10	10
Ethnic/regional identity	14	-	2	3	-
Just complete the ballots	-	2	3	3	6
Bribe/reward	-	-	-	2	1
Other (e.g. don't know)	-	2	-	1	9
Total (N=200)	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Field data

Table 8 shows that a majority of the respondents to our small survey claimed to have voted for their preferred presidential candidate because of his or her stand on issues, with just 14% saying they voted on the basis of ethnicity. Issues that informed the vote for president included the need to shift the presidency from central Kenya to other regions as a means of redistributing development resources, to ensure the implementation of the Constitution, to guarantee the peace and economic stability of the country and because of good development policies set out in the manifesto.

Votes for the other positions, apart from that of senator, were also claimed to have been informed by issues. In voting for the governor the voters were looking for someone who could solve development challenges in the county, while, with regard to the member of the National Assembly, the key issues in addition to solutions to the development challenges were continuity in order to complete development projects that had already been initiated and the drive to end nepotism, favouritism and corruption. With respect to the County Assembly representative the issues that informed voters' choices were facilitation of development in the ward and the creation of employment opportunities for the youth and women. It is significant that ethnic and regional identity were mentioned by just 3% of the voters in the election of the ordinary NA member. For reasons of brevity we did not ask this question in relation to the election of the woman representative.

The fact that voters are preoccupied with concerns about development when electing the governor, the member of the National Assembly and the County Assembly representative makes sense in the socio-economic circumstances described briefly above. This speaks to the desire for improved access to all kinds of services and it is, therefore, not surprising that the voters expected their local leaders at the ward, constituency and county levels to address these concerns. So even if ethnicity was also a concern it is not surprising that voters provide the answers they do in this kind of survey.

Though the senator seems not to have been elected because of concerns about development issues, the voters were looking for proper representation of the county at the national level. Consequently, they emphasised the personal qualities and characteristics of the candidate, such as oratorical skills, professional and political experience, personality and formal education. The ethnic identity of the candidate accounted for a paltry 2%, while the popularity of the political party led 11% to choose their senator. Thus, ethnicity was not claimed to be a major consideration here. It is also instructive to note that in identifying the ability to represent as a main reason, voters were actually trying to match the qualities of the candidate with the job description of a senator.

To ascertain whether the reasons for voting for various candidates also determined the outcome of the election we asked the respondents to tell us, based

on the results that had just been declared, what they saw as the key factor that influenced the victory of the winning candidates. Responses are summarised in Table 9.

Table 9
Factors Influencing the Victory of Candidates
%

Factors	Governor	Senator	Member of National Assembly	County Assembly Representative
Issues	3	-	-	30
Candidate qualities	22	53	36	38
Political party popularity	24	33	18	22
Ethnic or regional identity	-	3	1	1
Campaign strategy	5	5	10	-
Financial capacity / bribes	1	2	-	2
Pre-electoral deals in parties	44	-	-	-
Many candidates split votes	-	-	24	-
Electoral irregularities	-	3	4	-
Other (incl. Don't Know)	1	1	7	7
Total (N=200)	100	100	100	100

Source: Field data

Table 9 shows a significant variation in the factors shown in Table 8 as influencing the respondents in their vote for governor. It emerges that pre-election deals by political parties were perceived as more significant in determining the victory of the governor than the issues voters wished to be addressed.

The pre-election deals determined by what was referred to locally as 'consensus democracy' arose out of attempts by parties to present acceptable candidates to all regions and ethnic communities across the county. This led county level elective seats (governor, senator and woman NA representative) to be shared among different regions and communities in the county. For instance, in Busia County, the ODM aimed to reserve the senate seat for the Luyia candidate, while the governor's seat was reserved for a Teso candidate. The governor was then required to nominate his deputy not from the Teso but from the Luyia constituency. As for the woman representative, the party left it open to any candidate who won the primaries (which led to a remarkable spread of votes, (see Table 6)).

When respondents in a survey are asked, as they were here, about what people 'in general' do, they may *not* feel that they have to provide a socially acceptable answer and there is then reason to believe that answers to such questions come closer to the truth than they do to questions about the person's own motivation for doing this or that. There is therefore reason to believe that Table 9 speaks more validly about the actual situation in these counties than Table 8 – which then implies that issues should have played a much more reduced role than was argued above. And answers like 'ODM won the seat because the party was liked by the voters' are, of course, not very helpful because of their circular character.

Whereas one may argue that inter-community deals were ethnic in orientation, they were also meant to enhance the inclusion of all communities and regions in the governance of the county, and they may be comparable to Lijphart's consensus democracy, which, it has been argued, can contribute to resolving conflicts in ethnically divided societies through power sharing (Lijphart 1999). Indeed, the fact that respondents never considered that pre-election deals accounted for the victory of the senator, despite the fact that the parties had used them in their nomination, may be interpreted to mean that voters had opted to do away with the power-sharing deals negotiated by the parties and, therefore, proceeded to vet the senatorial candidates on the basis of personal qualities that would enable them to represent the county ably. Perhaps this explains why a significant proportion of the voters concluded that the popularity of the political party had influenced the victory of the governor, senator and woman National Assembly representative.

We did not ask our respondents about the key factor that influenced the outcome of the presidential election, but the general mood in the region was that there had been electoral fraud in the tallying of presidential results following the failure of the electronic voter identification and tallying kits. Given that Western Kenya had overwhelmingly voted for presidential candidates from the region, we interpret this to mean that the majority of the people in Western Kenya attributed the victory of the president to electoral irregularities.

On the whole, the responses to the questionnaire, with all their limitations, seem to indicate that ethnic and regional identity might have influenced some voters to vote in the 2013 general elections, but we cannot tell precisely what proportion of the electorate we are talking about. Consequently, we would argue that what appears to have been ethnic bloc voting by Luo voters was probably also influenced by considerations of socio-economic grievances that candidates promised to address and perceptions of candidates' general competencies. Similarly, the more disparate voting by the Luyia may not just be the result of a lack of ethnic unity among the many sub-groups of this region, as argued by

some analysts (MacArthur 2008), but also of different perceptions of how the socio-economic challenges could be solved.

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this article has been to examine the factors that determined electoral outcomes in the 2013 general elections in Western Kenya and to try to assess to what extent they represented an 'ethnic census'. Besides showing that Luyia voters did not just vote for their kinsman in the presidential race and for candidates of the 'Luyia party' in the other elections, it was illustrated that voters from both communities in Western Kenya had specific and aggregated reasons for voting for the various candidates. These reasons included the socio-economic challenges that confront voters in this part of Kenya, as their livelihoods figured particularly importantly in the responses. This suggests that – once again in the 2013 elections – seemingly ethnic patterns of voting concealed more complex combinations of issue-centred motivations, ethnic considerations and candidates' competencies and general profile.

In their 2007 study, Bratton & Kimenyi (2008, p 288) argued that social structural change is a necessary condition for the transformation of ethnic-voting into policy-voting patterns in Kenya. Our results suggest that such change is indeed taking place and that concerns about social and economic issues challenging livelihoods are a highly significant factor in determining voters' choices, especially at local level.

In his study of the 2007 elections, Cheeseman (2008, pp 168, 172) found that ethnicity tended to steal the headlines from 'social cleavages' that were increasingly influencing voting. He also pointed out that the power of party coalitions significantly influenced election results, and that the most successful coalition brought together groups that believed they had been historically unfairly disenfranchised. By contrast, the 2013 elections in Western Kenya were characterised by less effective coalition building, which saw the disintegration at the local level of CORD's 'six-piece voting strategy' and the more unwieldy Amani coalition. This may have helped to make issues more and ethnic identity less significant in determining the outcomes of the elections.

Further analysis of such trends would require access to the full set of election results Disaggregation and dissemination of all results down to – preferably – polling station level is a precondition for any in-depth statistical study of some of the points raised here. Unfortunately, what is available is the total number of votes for each candidate in all races and we can only hope that the IEBC will release the disaggregated polling station-level data for the benefit of academic and political analysts. There is certainly a clear need for further research more generally into

electoral politics in rural Kenya and, more specifically, for research that highlights the issues that make ethnic constituencies choose to vote more or less collectively.

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