

# International Journal of Humanity and Social Sciences

(IJHSS) **Heightened Inter-Ethnic Conflicts and Mitigating  
Measures in Turbo Sub-County, Uasin Gishu County,  
Kenya 1991-2010**



**CARI  
Journals**

## Heightened Inter-Ethnic Conflicts and Mitigating Measures in Turbo Sub-County, Uasin Gishu County, Kenya 1991-2010

 <sup>1\*</sup> Were Mbogo, <sup>2</sup> Wafula Peter, <sup>3</sup> Gimode Edwin

<sup>1\*, 2, 3</sup> Kenyatta University, Kenya

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0230-3913>

Accepted: 18<sup>th</sup> Jan, 2025 Received in Revised Form: 18<sup>th</sup> Feb, 2025 Published: 18<sup>th</sup> Mar, 2025

### Abstract

**Purpose:** The study explored how the political elite strategically manipulated Turbo's Sub-County ethnic diversity to further their own agendas, leading to the balkanization and the outbreak of violence during the 1992, 1997, and 2007 election cycles. The study also evaluated the mitigating measures implemented to address ethnic conflict in the region within the above timeframe and the successes or otherwise of those efforts.

**Methodology:** Purposive and snowballing sampling methods were employed and the data collected and analyzed qualitatively. Primary data was gathered by conducting questionnaires, interviews and by examining government official reports and archival documents whereas secondary data was sourced from theses, books, articles in newspapers and journals from libraries.

**Findings:** Politicization of ethnicity through balkanization of the residents into rigid ethnic enclaves provokes conflicts. There was creation of the 'outsiders' versus 'indigenous' narrative, where the Kalenjin, as the dominant group, viewed all other ethnic communities as outsiders, despite their long-standing presence in the area. The political manipulations that fueled these cycles of violence were further exacerbated by impunity, as perpetrators of violence were often shielded by political elites seeking to maintain power. These conflicts have amplified ethnic differences making citizens to consciously identify more with their ethnic groups than being Kenyan citizens. Interventions by different stakeholders have only partially been successful in addressing the heightened inter-ethnic conflicts in Turbo Sub- County between 1991 and 2010.

**Unique Contribution to Theory, Policy and Practice:** The study contributes to existing data on ethno-politics, inter-ethnic relations and the nature of politicization of ethnicity in Africa. It examines the grass root ethnicity mix up with national political incitement. The findings from this study, it is hoped, will contribute to formulation of new policy and interventions to improve national unity and integration in Kenya.

**Keywords:** *Politicization Of Ethnicity, Turbo Sub- County, Inter-Ethnic Conflicts, Majimbo.*

## Introduction

Turbo sub-county enjoyed relative peace during the 1980s, despite the 1982 failed coup. However, from 1990, as the Agikuyu and other Bantu ethnic groups aligned with the opposition, inter-ethnic conflict emerged. The repeal of Section 2(A) of Kenya's constitution in 1991 allowed for political pluralism, dividing Turbo along ethnic and political lines. Under Section 2A (1982-1991), Kenya was a one-party state, with Kenya African National Union as the only legal party. In the 1990s, political elites, mainly from the Abaluhya, Luo, and GEMA communities, opposed Daniel Moi's regime. The Abaluhya and some Luo felt excluded, while the Agikuyu longed for the privileges they enjoyed under Kenyatta. A brief Luo-Agikuyu unity emerged against Moi but quickly fractured as FORD split into two factions. The Kalenjin, perceiving Turbo as their "home," felt threatened by the opposition's embrace of pluralism, viewing it as a challenge to President Moi. The designation of Turbo as a KANU stronghold transformed the political contest into an ethnic struggle, with Moi's supporters equating opposition to disloyalty to the Kalenjin-led government.

## Statement of the problem

Ethnic conflicts have centered on shared boundaries or actual "foreign" settled communities within territories of the indigenes. The outcome has in most cases been boiling animosity and desire for control of resources which many times flare up into violence. Turbo sub-county, the focus of the study is a multi-ethnic area with the Kalenjin being the older inhabitants. Land acquisition by other communities in the area was through land buying companies such as Kiambaa Farmers Company Limited, Uasin Gishu Company Limited and Mweyenderi Company Limited (Khamisi, 2018). The new immigrants included the Luo, Abagusii, Abaluhya and Agikuyu. These communities amicably took part in their economic activities, sent their children to the same schools, traded peacefully and even inter-married. However, intermittent inter-ethnic conflicts have been witnessed in the area with their frequency and scope increasing from 1992 due to heightened ethno-politics during the general elections. Arson, rape, murder, theft of livestock and farm produce has been some of the effects. The conflicts are a matter of great interest to the diverse communities in the study area, the non-state and state actors alike since they have been harmful to national tranquility, public peace and the rule of law which are key pillars to social and economic development hence the need for this study.

## Discussion

### The 1991/1992 and 1997/98 Inter-Ethnic Conflicts.

In the 1980s the KANU youth wingers popularly referred to as YK'92 (youth for KANU) had been established ostensibly to popularize the ruling party (Africa Watch, 1991:14). However, in the 1990s they turned into feared group targeting anti-establishment in all manner of intimidation and molestation. President Moi and his co-ethnics, the Kalenjin, depicted the calls for political pluralism as an anti-Kalenjin movement. As such, the ethnicization of politics and



promotion of ethnic violence by the local politicians took shape and the notion that every group had a homeland and the right to eject the non-Kalenjin gained ground. The local politicians then, such as William Ruto the then secretary of the KANU youth wing, William Saina and Jackson Kibor were on the forefront intimidating the multi-party advocates and demanding that non-indigenous people leave politics to local communities. Similarly, Farouk Kibet alias Kipkazi was cited as being on the forefront engaging KANU youth wingmen and advancing the agenda of the then president Moi led party.

During the campaigns, those who advocated for *majimboism* frequently called for the expulsion of all other ethnic groups from land occupied initially by the Kalenjin and other pastoral ethnic groups before colonialism (Weekly Review June, 29, 1993). Of all Kalenjin leaders Hon. Nicholas Biwott a cabinet minister, at a rally held on September 21, 1991, in Kapkatet (Kericho District, Rift Valley Province then), came out very strongly in defense of the Kalenjin interests. Implying that the Agikuyu had endangered their interest, a charged Biwott stated that his co-ethnics were there to stay even after president Moi's rule expires (Weekly Review October 7, 1994). He further cautioned that FORD members would be "crushed" and that KANU youth wingers would be ready to fight to the last person to protect Moi's reign (Africa Watch, 1991:14).

The local politicians in Turbo Sub County played upon the immigrant narrative and pervasive fears of immigrant domination using the 'Majimbo' debate. To many respondents, the debate had been understood as the establishment of mutually exclusive ethnically defined regionalism in Kenya. The three MPs of Eldoret North, Eldoret East, and Eldoret South constituencies which made up the Uasin Gishu district then were anti-multipartyism. The rallies otherwise called "majimbo rallies" were preceded by a statement by Dr. J.K Misoi then MP for Eldoret south at a press conference in Eldoret, declaring that he had drafted a "majimbo" constitution which would be tabled before the house if advocates of multipartyism continued their crusade (Kiliku, 1998). The Turbo area, then Eldoret North constituency, MP Reuben Chesire, a majimbo proponent, was one of the local political leaders, who was said to have intimidated the non-Kalenjin with violence and eviction if they did not support KANU, the party led by president Moi, a Kalenjin. Chesire together with Ezekiel Barngetuny a KANU apologist and businessman and Nicholas Biwott were further cited to paying the Kalenjin warriors to carry out attacks on non-Kalenjin (Kiliku, 1992:75).

Further calls were made at the meeting for the Kalenjin to be prepared to safeguard the government and to arm themselves with arrows and bows to destroy any multiparty proponent they could see (Kiliku, 1992:9). Such calls contributed to ethnic antagonism. Consequently, intermittent Kalenjin attacks against non-Kalenjin who were 'not in the government' took place, aiming at intimidating, displacing and otherwise preventing opposition supporters from voting 'the consciousness of ethnic territoriality', the KANU way.

Moreover, all local government officials, including the local chiefs, being direct appointees of the President's Office had to toe the line of defending establishment of

multipartism. As such, they had a role in calling for eviction of non-Kalenjin in the area (Kiliku,1992:9).The Agikuyu, Abaluhya, Luo, Akamba and other non-Kalenjin who had found permanent residence in the study area were implicitly referred to as *madoadoa* (unwanted groups) who needed to be driven away because they were perceived to be supporters of multipartism or its sympathizers . To date, these notions have made the Kalenjin in Turbo sub-county to perceive the Abaluhya, Abagusii, Luo, Agikuyu and other non-Kalenjin presence on what they consider to be their ancestral lands as detrimental, unjust and illegitimate. Given the enormous influence the politicians commanded among their electorate, the ethnic question resulted to a political polarization on the basis of ethnicity, from which Kenya, three decades on, is yet to recover.

Anti-Agikuyu sentiment was high throughout 1991 and 1992, especially among Kalenjin politicians in Turbo sub-county. These leaders spread the notion that the Agikuyu would seek revenge if they gained power, urging Kalenjin to defend their land, reclaim property, and evict the Agikuyu. This rhetoric reinforced ethnic territoriality and ethnicized political spaces. Kalenjin supporters of the opposition faced intimidation and stigma, leading to a manipulated electoral process where KANU ‘won’ despite allegations of rigging, gerrymandering, and the use of state resources. KANU’s Reuben Chesire secured the parliamentary seat against opposition candidates, despite irregularities reported by observers (Troup and Hornsby, 1998:588).

The violence that followed the 1992 elections led many non-Kalenjin victims to leave the area, with some swapping land to avoid further conflict. Local Kalenjin authorities sometimes forced victims to exchange land under the threat of violence, disregarding legal processes. In Tapsagoi ward for example a Kalenjin chief threatened further violence unless non-Kalenjin landowners exchanged their property with co-ethnics, in disregard of the Land Control Board rules (BBC, 1993:17). These actions strained inter-ethnic relations and contributed to the perception of ethnic others as ‘immigrants,’ reinforcing ethnic boundaries and residential segregation. This grassroots ethnic consciousness helped perpetuate negative ethnic rhetoric from political leaders, fueling further division.

In the 1997 general elections the noteworthy presidential candidates in the opposition were Mwai Kibaki of Democratic Party(DP),Raila Odinga of the National Development Party(NDP),Charity Ngilu of Social Democratic Party(SDP) and Kijana Wamalwa of Forum for Restoration and Democracy Kenya(FORD Kenya). As in the previous cases, ethnic mobilization emerged as a central feature of the elections. KANU remained predominantly a Kalenjin party, NDP was Luo, DP was Agikuyu, SDP was Akamba and Ford Kenya Abaluhya.

The campaigns took on an ethno-political nature, with political power seen as crucial for dealing with "ethnic opponents." In the presidential race, Kalenjin were determined to keep Moi in power for a fourth term, leading to numerous strategies that undermined fair elections. These included biased voter registration that excluded opposition voters and an Electoral Commission of Kenya (ECK) that was manipulated to favor KANU. Many Agikuyu from Huruma ward

reported being unable to vote due to missing names on the register, despite having valid voter cards. KANU used these tactics to prevent a Kibaki victory.

KANU supporters, encouraged by the ruling party, provoked violence against opposition backers during and after the election. Pro-Moi MPs threatened retaliation after Kibaki rejected the results, with Simon Kiptum Arap Choge, a Minister in the Office of the President warning of nationwide bloodshed if Kibaki's petition succeeded. Despite these threats, the police did not intervene, allowing the incitement to continue without consequences (Amnesty International, 10 June 1998).

Mwai Kibaki's petition challenging President Moi's 1997 victory sparked ethnic tensions, especially between the Kalenjin and Agikuyu. Many saw the contest as a conflict between these two groups, fueled by Kibaki's success in Central Province. This angered the Kalenjin, who retaliated by attacking the Agikuyu in parts of Turbo Sub-County. At the constituency level, William Ruto defeated KANU's preferred candidate, Reuben Chesire. Kalenjin, encouraged by KANU politicians, called for the expulsion of "settlers" from their territory.

### **The Kibaki Era: The 2007/08 Post Election Violence and the New Constitution.**

From 1999 to 2002, Turbo Sub County experienced relative calm. Moi was serving his last constitutional term, limiting him to two five-year terms. On 14th October 2002, Uhuru Kenyatta, an Agikuyu, was nominated as KANU's presidential candidate to succeed Moi. This marked a key shift, as previous ethnic conflicts arose when Kalenjin and Agikuyu candidates competed. In 2002, with no Kalenjin candidate, the community supported Moi's preferred successor, Uhuru Kenyatta, leading to the absence of inter-ethnic conflict in Turbo sub-county.

Senior Kalenjin politicians, including William Ruto and Henry Kosgei, campaigned for Uhuru Kenyatta in the 2002 presidential race. Ruto reportedly stated that an agreement with the Agikuyu would protect the Kalenjin after Moi's retirement if Uhuru won (Branch, 2011:247). The race was between two Agikuyu, Uhuru and Mwai Kibaki, emphasizing party politics over ethnic divisions. The opposition united behind Kibaki, forming the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC), while the Kalenjin supported KANU. After Kibaki's victory, political tensions escalated due to a breakdown in the coalition over a failed pre-election agreement (MoU), leading to renewed political animosity (Ajulu, 2008:49). Kibaki's disregard of the MoU and his appointment of Raila Odinga as Prime Minister was seen as a betrayal of the Luo by the Agikuyu.

Such political disputes were often interpreted as attacks on entire ethnic groups, with the longstanding Agikuyu-Luo rivalry since independence resurfacing. Many viewed Kibaki's actions as mirroring Jomo Kenyatta's expulsion of the Luo from government post-independence. This deepened inter-ethnic tensions, shifting focus from Kalenjin to the Agikuyu-Luo conflict, which was supported by other ethnic groups in the area.

In 2005 there was polarized campaigns for the 'No' and 'Yes', Orange and Banana Referendum on the proposed constitution as the political elite mobilized along ethnic lines

(Kenya Times 17th November 2005:3). The NARC government under Kibaki supported the draft by Amos Wako, the then attorney general, while Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) brought together antagonists in NARC coalition for its rejection. In the end, the Kibaki government (Banana team) was defeated (Nasong'o and Murunga, 2007).

By the end of 2005, Kibaki's administration, like those of Kenyatta and Moi, reinforced ethnic politics and exclusion. Many felt Kibaki appointed fellow Agikuyu, fueling bitterness among other groups, especially the Kalenjin, who felt sidelined after 24 years of Moi's rule. The reshuffling of the military and exclusion of Kalenjin youth further entrenched Agikuyu dominance (Murungi, 2012:28). By 2007, a widespread narrative of Agikuyu selfishness shaped opposition to Kibaki's candidacy.

In the 2007 elections, ethnic alliances were key to winning. Kibaki's Party of National Unity (PNU) was dominated by GEMA, while the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) was supported by the Kalenjin, Luo, and other ethnic groups, forming an unlikely alliance between the Luo and Kalenjin. However, tensions resurfaced when Uhuru Kenyatta's KANU left the ODM alliance in July 2007 to rejoin Kibaki's PNU.

During the electoral campaigns, the Majimbo debate, described newly as *Ugatuzi* (the devolution of resources and power to the regions) was resurrected as ODM, taking advantage of many peoples' strong wish for constitutional changes, gave a promise of a federal system of government when elected. Whilst ODM did not openly advocate for the expelling of 'foreigners' from their primary areas of residence, there was an intentional vagueness as to what the term meant (Anderson, 2010: 50). This led to deliberate negative interpretation at the local level. Essentially, according to the Kalenjin, in the event that ODM got to power it would reverse the economic and political control of the Rift Valley region by the settler communities, particularly the Agikuyu in case it won the election. This perception bolstered ODM's popularity locally.

Furthermore, the Kalenjin, 'understood it as ethnic groups, but in particular the Agikuyu, going back to their ancestral areas. In one specific campaign speech William Ruto is said to have stated that, following the election, all the Agikuyu would be returned to Othaya, the home area of Kibaki, in one pick-up truck. These claims were corroborated by proof given to the Waki commission (the CIPEV), and clearly illustrates incitements of high levels by the elite. The ambiguity connected to majimboism fanned narratives of "ethnic belonging" to and territorial ownership, contributing to its interpretation in terms of promoting ethnic ownership. This deliberate elite ambiguity plus the subsequent interpretation at the grassroots level sheds light upon ways the top-down mobilization interacts with bottom-up discourses and comprehension of society and politics.

Furthermore, during the campaigns, inflammatory statements, hate speech and direct encouragement to violence 'was spoken of in all circles. Particularly, there was incitement to use violence to oppose the election outcome in the event of a Kibaki victory' (Human Rights Watch ,2008:4). Such narratives were taken up by many ordinary people and local elite who produced

and reproduced them with more open sinister and frightening overtones in their everyday conversations and interactions.

Consequently, the politicization of ethnicity resulted to Post Election Violence (PEV) because of the built-up of differences along ethnicity with the main cause being an allegation of election rigging by the Electoral Commission of Kenya to favor PNU and its candidate, President Mwai Kibaki. Few minutes after the announcement of Kibaki's victory, ODM's Raila Odinga dismissed the results and refused to acknowledge Kibaki. Consequently, they called their followers out to object to what they termed rigging of the election by Kibaki and PNU (Daily Nation, January 15th 2008:46). To many Kalenjin the rigging had robbed William Ruto the then Eldoret North constituency MP and a member of the Parliament, ODM's governing body (who in the view of many Kalenjin was both a communal and a national leader) and his party leader and presidential candidate Raila Odinga of ODM what seemed as a direct victory. The PNU adherents, real and imagined, got targeted for reprisals as some were forcefully ejected from their homes, raped, their property looted and others killed.

In the 2007 post-election violence, anti-Agikuyu sentiment, similar to the 1990s, fueled ODM's mobilization. Attacks against Agikuyu, identified as PNU supporters, were particularly intense. Many Agikuyu, involved in transport, farming, and trade, were targeted for perceived economic privilege under Kibaki's government. There were allegations that violence was coordinated at William Ruto's Sugoi home through a group called the 'Network.' However, the ICC found a lack of direct evidence (ICC, 2011:14).

Reprisals attacks were also made against the Kalenjin warriors. Agikuyu youths formed so-called 'self-defense forces' against perceived ODM supporters, predominantly from the Kalenjin and Luo. The Standard (9 February 2008) reported an incident whereby over thirty youths who were involved in a 'revenge mission' in Huruma ward were arrested by GSU officers. In early January 2008, Kalenjin youth, armed with arrows, set homes ablaze in various areas, displacing many women and children. Several Agikuyu were killed in these attacks.

Prominent Kalenjin leaders, including Jackson Kibor, an ODM civic leader openly encouraged violence. Kibor's inflammatory rhetoric, calling for war against the Agikuyu, was widely reported (BBC, 2008). Despite evidence of involvement by local leaders, many were never held accountable. Notably, Kibor, previously listed in the Akiwumi Commission's investigation into ethnic clashes, was never prosecuted (Daily Nation, February 29, 2008). Figures like Isaac Maiyo who was William Ruto's parliamentary campaign manager and Ruto's aide Farouk Kibet were also cited as perpetrators but faced no significant legal consequences.

The PEV came to an end on 28 February 2008 following an agreement under mediation by the principal negotiator Kofi Annan and the mediation team of Eminent African Persons between the PNU and the ODM leaders to share power. Nevertheless, in 2009 it was reported that ethnic tensions "were still festering" (CISNET Kenya CX219401). The PEV revealed the deep-rooted inter-ethnic suspicion and hatred among Turbo sub county residents and Kenyans at



large. Although there was calm in the area, coexistence of the Luo, Abaluhya, Abagusii, Agikuyu, Kalenjin and other ethnic groups in the area was still characterized by suspicion and mistrust. The 2007/08 PEV occasioned social, economic, political and even psychological disruptions. According to official sources, 205 people died in the PEV in the Uasin Gishu district alone (CIPEV, 2008). On the social front, the ordeal caused mistrust across ethnic groups, hence affecting social capital among communities. Ethnic mistrust heightened because neighbors who had lived peacefully turned against each other in spite of the fact that they had co-existed peacefully for a long time.

On the positive note however, the PEV “empowered” the multi-ethnic community of Turbo Sub County to reflect on their collective situation in relation to the state and other members of the society. They could ignore ethnicity in favor of creating a united front against an exploitative state and politicians that take advantage of their situation.

The Kibaki-Raila accord led to the creation of number of commissions and other institutional reforms, including constitutional and electoral. One of the key commissions that the National Dialogue created was the Commission of Inquiry into the Post-Election Violence (CIPEV), also known as the Waki Commission, named after its chair, Kenyan Justice Philip Waki. The Waki Report is an invaluable account of the violent acts that took place across Kenya in the two months that followed the December 2007 elections. Constitutional reform had been high on the public agenda for at least two decades. The August 2010 promulgation of a new constitution, after majority of Kenyans expressed their support in a referendum, is arguably the most important concrete achievement of the National Dialogue and Reconciliation process. The Constitution has made various strides to find solution for disharmony. This includes the move towards equality, inclusivity, disallowing of the creation of political parties that are ethnic based and the creation of national values in promotion of a national identity. The new constitution thus has the potential to do away with cosmetic peace and cement a spirit of nationhood. However, the longer-term effect of the new constitution will depend heavily on the government’s respect for the rule of law and constitutionalism, which is consequently subject to its political, will.

### **Strategies and Challenges in Mitigating of Inter-Ethnic Conflicts in Turbo sub-County, 1991-2010.**

The elder-hood institution played a crucial role in managing the 1992/93 violence in Turbo sub-county. Each ethnic group contributed to the Divisional Peace Committee (DPC), a council formed to foster peace. The provincial administration facilitated meetings between elders from conflicting ethnic groups, with the aim of reconciliation. However, these peace talks were seen as many as “marriage of convenience” with selfish interests. While the elders were trusted for their wisdom, they were also accused of initiating violence, rallying youth to attack, and promoting ethnic solidarity against perceived enemies. Elders denied claims of corruption but were sometimes influenced by the former KANU regime, losing community trust. Despite weaknesses, the elder-hood institution remained important in managing ethnic conflicts.

The most common approach behind the reduction of inter-ethnic conflicts during the 1991/92 violence cycle in the study area was empowerment from the NGOs and humanitarian assistance. The United Nations Development Program was commended for its involvement in a number of interventions that supported national integration and cohesion in Turbo sub-county. These included resettlement of IDPs, conflict-resolution fora and collaboration with religious actors to establish existing relationships of trust with communities. However, efforts by UNDP did not receive massive support from the KANU government led by president Moi. Coupled by international and local criticism for its lack of indifference, it pulled out and the program ceased to function in 1995 (Klopp, 2006:67-69). Many NGOs existed in the urban centers and not in the rural setting. Their outreach to poor rural areas was not perceived to have been particularly effective. There's thus need to address this shortcoming and properly coordinate local linkages and government programs in addressing inter-ethnic conflicts.

Accounts of war, government propaganda and other forms of mediation tend to cast women as inert naive victims and men as peace builders (Odongo, 2004). However, this is not truly the case, as women played significant roles as advocates of peace and as relief aid-workers in the intermittent inter-ethnic conflicts. Many Kalenjin women used traditional methods, like cursing, to prevent their sons from joining the war. Through the assistance of Catholic Peace and Justice Commission and Eldoret Rural Women Peace Link (RWPL), sporting activities were introduced by women as way of nurturing friendly relations among the youth from various ethnic groups (Ngyemura 2010, 75). After such games, seminars were held to debate and analyze conflict situation and assign the youths duties.

The Rural Women Peace Link was created as part of NCCK of Kenya project in 1992 with the objective of providing a forum for women participation in peace building in different ethnic groups affected by the clashes. Women in Turbo Sub County were part of the project as they engaged in integration of the warring ethnic groups, especially the Kalenjin and Agikuyu through traditional peace building mechanism and exchange programs. They conducted rural peace exchange programs and solidarity visits where they donated food to the victims and encouraged parents to discourage their children from being misused by the politicians for their selfish interests. Despite these efforts, lack of funding and cultural beliefs such as viewing them as uncritical advocates for peace limited women's full participation in peace building. The article emphasizes the need to recognize women as active agents in conflict resolution.

The politicians had double standards in conflict and peace building. Even though most of them were the masterminds of the violence they were the same quoted to have occasionally visited areas affected by clashes, appealed for calm and made new promises but which brought no subsequent positive change. The same politicians were chief guests at funds drive that helped many PEV victims settle down peacefully. The politicians occasionally gave philanthropic aid to impoverished IDPs and other vulnerable groups in the study area.

During and after inter-ethnic conflicts in Turbo Sub-County, both Islamic and Christian communities played a key role in conflict resolution, reconciliation, faith-based trauma

counseling, and providing essential aid like food, clothing, and shelter for victims. Religious institutions were seen as neutral spaces for those fleeing violence. However, during the 1992 general elections, many churches allowed ethnicity to shape their political leanings. Some churches, like the Africa Inland Church (AIC), supported president Moi, a Kalenjin (Weekly Review, 7, 1992), while others failed to rise above ethnic divisions, with some even inciting violence thus contributing to political and ethnic biases. Similarly, in dealing with the clashes the AIC and the Gospel Churches in the area were more passive compared to the Church Province of Kenya (CPK) Diocese of Eldoret and the Catholic Diocese of Eldoret which were seriously involved. The Catholic Church, particularly Bishop Cornelius Korir, of the Catholic Diocese of Eldoret then actively condemned ethnic violence and worked towards peace in Turbo Sub County and the Rift Valley province at large (The Weekly Review, 16, 1992). In the 1992/1992 ethnic strife the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) was also involved in relief efforts, helping establish IDP camps in Eldoret and Turbo towns (The Weekly Review, 5, 1998).

On 24th August 1996, the NCCCK organized a two day workshop in Eldoret Sirikwa hotel whereby the political elite in KANU and opposition in attendance promised to "encourage the growth of civility in political dialogue and emphasized those aspects of speech and conduct that raised tensions and reduced mutual respect among Kenyans (Daily Nation 25th August, 1996:1-2). The Sirikwa accord partly encouraged peace in the country (NCCCK, Aug. 31, 1995).

Despite this, some churches were criticized for their passive involvement during the 2007/08 post-election violence (PEV), with some Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) accused of , orchestrating ethnic hatred by furthering and defending the biased political positions of the ethnic communities in defiance of their professed religious ideals (CIPEV, 2008:217). The Church's clear ethnic split and lack of voice disappointed Kenyans. Frequent columns in the newsletters during the time clearly illustrated the disappointment. Editorials appeared with headlines such as "When the shepherds led their flock astray" (Daily Nation, 15, Feb, 2008). There is thus a strong call for religious organizations to remain impartial, avoid political capture, and act as neutral mediators in future conflicts.

During the 2007/08 PEV the television and radio stations were cited as being very helpful in informing the people what was happening in the country and highlighting the plight of IDPs. However, as much as the media was considered vital they were equally blamed for fostering divisions. Majority of the respondents noted that some of the FM vernacular stations created a climate of hate and negative ethnicity during the PEV. According to IREC (2008:100) Inoro FM played Agikuyu dialect songs that imaged Raila Odinga as a murderer and even characterized the Luo as lazy hooligans who did not pay rent. Kameme and Coro FM radio stations broadcasting in Agikuyu dialect were also cited as having had programs that encouraged ethnic divisions. Furthermore, Kass FM, broadcasting in Kalenjin language, also aired materials of xenophobic nature against the Agikuyu with Joshua Sang calling on the youth to join the violence. In addition, it aired phrases such as '*madoadoa*' meaning foreigners or spots in the Rift valley region, Turbo sub county included (CIPEV (2008). The media's role in fueling ethnic

tensions highlights the need for responsible, unbiased journalism that combats misinformation and promotes unity, free from political and commercial influence.

The police and defense forces were historically perceived as ethnically aligned, which led to partiality during crises, such as the 2007/08 PEV. Claims of police divisions along ethnic lines emerged, with officers favoring certain groups (Waki, 2010). Due to the divisions at some point some senior Criminal Investigations Department (CID) officers were sent from Nairobi to take statements from those who were displaced and investigate the organization of PEV by Kalenjin leaders (HRW Jan 2008). Furthermore, the police often failed to use proper crowd control measures, resorting to live ammunition without warnings, as documented in hospital records (CIPEV, 2008). Such actions eroded public trust in the police, encouraging vigilantes to take justice into their own hands, further exacerbating the conflict. This partiality must be condemned for undermining conflict resolution.

Despite positive efforts during the 2007/08 PEV, where security forces helped evacuate victims and took them to IDP camps initially established at the Agricultural Showground of Kenya in Eldoret town (CIPEV 2008:54), the police's actions were ineffective. The lack of coordinated efforts to arrest and prosecute violence inciters' undermined peace-building. Some perpetrators were arrested but released without trial, eroding public trust in the police and encouraging impunity. The article calls for a complete overhaul of police principles, ensuring a balance between maintaining order and protecting citizens' rights during demonstrations.

### **Findings and conclusion**

The study has explored how political elites have exploited ethnic diversity to instigate violence in Turbo Sub- County during the 1992, 1997, and 2007 election periods. Political patronage and mobilization fueled the 'outsiders' versus 'indigenous' narratives, with the Kalenjin perceiving themselves as the "indigenous" and others as "outsiders." The failure of non-Kalenjin communities to support President Moi in 1992 led to retaliatory violence. This pattern repeated in 1997 and 2007/08, with attacks on settler communities and their property. On the basis of the findings, the study established that identity on the basis of ethnic background has prominently been used as a major foundation for political mobilization and as a means of acquiring power and control of the state. Ethnicization of the territory in the area has also been expressed by the Kalenjin in form of advocacy for *majimbo* federalism and claims of autochthony. Divisive political narratives have thus soured inter-ethnic relations in Turbo sub-county. Moreover, study findings reveal that efforts to mitigate conflicts based on ethnic differences since 1991 have been inadequate. Firstly, the Kenyan government, especially in the 1990s only did the bare minimum in resolving the conflicts. Moreover, reports show that the government itself took part in triggering some of the conflicts. In addition, the study highlighted various gaps limiting successful conflict resolution. Among these include; inadequate attention to the grievances raised by the conflicting ethnic groups, and the failure to hold perpetrators accountable to their actions. As a result, there is establishment and prevalence of an impunitive



culture. Furthermore, there lacks collaboration among relevant stakeholders meant to facilitate peaceful co-existence.

### **Recommendation for Policy and Practice**

The study faults government efforts for its top-down approach to peace building and recommends bottom-up approaches. To overcome ‘political capture’ by the religious community the study advocates for re-registration and strict regulation of religious community so as to hold it accountable to the citizens. The study also recommends that the elderhood institution be resourced and be granted the particular authority to manage ethnic conflicts everywhere in Kenya so that peaceful inter-ethnic co-existence is achieved. Finally, to deal with historical or perceived historical injustices and mend inter-ethnic distrust and suspicion the study calls for establishment of a well-structured and people-centered Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) free from politicization to contribute to permanent justice, reconciliation and conflict resolution in the country. The recommendations are aimed to inform the policy makers and other stakeholders on how to resolve inter-ethnic conflicts and thus promote peaceful coexistence among different ethnic groups. Further research is warranted to explore how the social media as the new battlefield of inter-ethnic hatred can be tamed to avoid its future eruption to violent physical conflict.

### **References**

- Africa Watch Committee. (1991). Kenya: Taking liberties. Human Rights Watch.
- Ajulu, R. (2008). Kenya's 2007 elections: Derailing democracy through ethno-regional violence. *African Security Review*, 17(3), 55-70. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10246029.2008.9627540>.
- Amnesty International. (1998). Amnesty International Annual Report 1998. Amnesty International.
- Anderson, D.(2010). ‘Majimboism: The troubled history of an idea’, in Daniel Branch, Nic Cheeseman, and Leigh Gardner (eds.), *Our Turn to Eat: Politics in Kenya since 1950*, Lit Verlag, Berlin, pp. 23-52.
- Branch, D. (2011). *Kenya: Between hope and despair, 1963–2011*. Yale University Press.
- CISNET. (2008).Kenya-KEN 38226-Luo-Kikuyu-Ethnic Violence.CISNET.
- Daily Nation, 25th August, 1996: 1-2.
- Daily Nation “*When the Shepherds led the Flocks Away*”, 15th February 2008.
- Government of Kenya. (1992). Report of the Parliamentary Committee to Investigate Ethnic Clashes in Western and other Parts of Kenya. The Kiliku Report. Nairobi: Government Printer.

- Government of Kenya. (1999). Report of the Judicial Commission Appointed to Inquire into Tribal Clashes in Kenya. Akiwumi Report. Nairobi: Government Printer.
- Government of Kenya. (2010). Commission of Inquiry into the Post-Election Violence (CIPEV). The Waki Commission. Nairobi: Government Printer.
- Human Rights Watch. (2008). "Ballots to Bullets: Organized Political Violence and Kenya's Crisis of Governance." 20, 1(A). New York and Washington.
- International Criminal Court, (ICC), 2011, 'In the case of the prosecutor v. William Samoei Ruto, Henry Kiprono Kosgey and Joshua arap Sang: Document Containing the Charges', Available at <http://www.creatakenya.org/uploads/Ocampo-DCC-RutoKosgey-Sang.pdf> {Accessed 7 February 3 2025}.
- "Kenya Cleansed," BBC Focus on Africa, Vol. 4, No. 3, July-September 1993, p. 17-18).  
Pascale Harter, "Assignment," BBC World Service, January 31, 2008.
- Klopp, J. M. (2006). Kenya's internally displaced: Managing civil conflict in democratic transitions. In D. Bekoe (Ed.), *East Africa and the Horn: Confronting challenges to good governance* (pp. 121-144). Lynne Rienner Publishers.
- Kriegler, J. (Chair). (2008). Report of the Independent Review Commission on the General Elections held in Kenya on 27th December 2007. Government Printer.
- Murungi, K. (2012, 28th October). *The claims of betrayal that killed coalition*. Sunday Daily Nation, p. 28.
- Nasong'o, S.W. & Murunga, G.P. Ed. (2007). *Kenya: The struggle for Democracy*. London: Zed Books Ltd.
- National Council of Churches Kenya: Clashes Update Issue No.43, Aug. 31, 1995.
- Ngyemura, J. (2010). Women, Conflict, and Peace Building in Kenya. *African Journal on Conflict Resolution*, 10(2), 9-28. <https://doi.org/10.4314/ajcr.v10i2.3>.
- Odongo, G. (2004). Role of women in peace building in Kenya: Focusing on the 1992 Rift Valley land clashes. Master's Thesis. University of Zimbabwe.
- Throup, D & C Hornsby. (1998). *Multiparty Politics in Kenya: The Kenyatta and Moi States and the Triumph of the System in the 1992 Election*. Oxford: James Currey.
- Times Team, 'Vote Banana. Civil Servants ordered', Kenya Times 17 November 2005, p. 3.
- Transcript from BBC World Service 'Assignment', January 31, 2008.
- Nation team, "Kibor released on 200,000Sh bond,." Daily Nation, February 29, 2008.
- Standard "33 arrested in Eldoret revenge mission", The Saturday Standard, 9 February 2008, p. 4.

Weekly review, “*Honest Broker*”7,19th June 1992.

Weekly Review June, 29, 1993.

Weekly Review October 7, 1994:4. *Divide and Rule: State -sponsored Ethnic Violence in Kenya.*

Weekly Review “*Oh, Not Again!*”5,30th January 1998.



©2025 by the Authors. This Article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)