

PARTY IDEOLOGY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLITICAL COALITIONS IN KENYA SINCE 1945

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the evolution of party ideologies and political coalitions in Kenya since 1945. It utilized pragmatism research philosophy, political coalition theory, and descriptive research design to analyse how party ideologies have influenced coalitions. The findings reveal that in the pre-independence period, party ideologies were strongly shaped by ethnic-based and nationalist movements, which defined political alliances. After independence, Kenya African National Union (KANU) emerged as the dominant party, initially espousing African socialism and nationalism under Kenyatta. However, this vision faced challenges due to ethnic patronage and power consolidation within the party. Over time, party ideologies shifted, with KANU moving towards authoritarianism under Moi, while opposition forces like Forum of Restoration of Democracy advocated for democratic reforms. The contemporary landscape has been characterized by the rise of coalition politics, where alliances are often formed based on pragmatic interests rather than strict ideological compatibility. Parties like National Rainbow Coalition, Orange Democratic Movement, Jubilee Alliance, and Kenya Kwanza have embraced diverse ideologies, from democratic reforms to economic development. The fluidity and complexity of Kenya's political landscape suggest that individual ambitions, power dynamics, and pragmatic considerations have often taken precedence over adherence to coherent ideological principles.

Key Words: Coalition politics, Ideological coherence, Party Ideology, Pragmatism

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INTRODUCTION

The evolution of party ideologies and the development of political coalitions has been a subject of global interest, as scholars and policymakers seek to understand the complex dynamics that shape the political landscapes of various countries (Falcó-Gimeno and Fernandez-Vazquez, 2020). At the global level, research on party ideologies has emphasized the role of economic and social cleavages in shaping party positions and alliances (Pollmann, 2023). Lipset and Rokkan's (1967) seminal work on cleavage structures has been widely applied to understand the ideological positioning of parties and the formation of cross-cutting coalitions. Furthermore, the literature on party competition and coalition dynamics, exemplified by the work of Laver and Schofield, has provided a framework for analyzing the strategic considerations that underlie coalition-building efforts (Laver and Schofield, 1998).

In the Kenyan context, scholars have examined the ways in which the country's unique historical trajectory, ethnic diversity, and post-colonial dynamics have shaped the development of party ideologies and coalition-building. Works by researchers such as Etyang (2021), Khadiagala (2021) and Kadima and Owuor (2014) have highlighted the interplay between ethnic, nationalist, and socio-economic factors in the shaping of Kenya's political landscape. Additionally, studies by Cheeseman, Lynch, and Willis have explored the challenges of democratic consolidation and the evolving nature of coalition politics in the country (Cheeseman *et al.*, 2021).

The political landscape in Kenya has been shaped significantly by its colonial history, which laid the groundwork for party formation and ideological development. The Kenya African National Union (KANU), formed in 1960, became the dominant party at independence in 1963. KANU's ideology was rooted in nationalism, seeking to unite various ethnic groups under a single national identity (Opondo, 2014). In contrast, the





Kenya People's Union (KPU), formed in 1966, represented a more leftist approach, advocating for socialist policies and greater representation of marginalized groups (Thuo and Kioko, 2023).

Kwamtemba (2008) postulated that political parties in Kenya have often been influenced by ethnic affiliations, which complicate the ideological landscape. Ethnic identity plays a significant role in shaping political allegiances and party ideologies, leading to a situation where parties may adopt populist rhetoric to appeal to specific ethnic groups (Elischer, 2013). Further, Elischer (2013) observes that the interplay between ideology and ethnicity has been critical in the formation of coalitions, particularly during elections.

The development of political coalitions in Kenya has been marked by strategic alliances aimed at consolidating power and enhancing electoral success. The National Rainbow Coalition (NARC), which came to power in 2002, is a notable example of how diverse parties can unite against a common opponent, in this case, the Kenya African National Union (KANU) (Kuria, 2012). NARC's ideology was a blend of various political perspectives, emphasizing reform and democratization, which attracted a broad base of support. In recent years, the Jubilee Alliance, formed in 2013, showcased a coalition of parties with varying ideologies coming together to secure electoral victories, this is in line with the theory of political coalition that emphasizes that party's objective in formation of coalitions is to attain "minimum winning coalitions," which are the smallest possible alliances needed to achieve a desired outcome, such as winning an election (Riker, 1977). This coalition highlighted the pragmatic approach to politics in Kenya, where ideological purity often takes a backseat to electoral strategy (Widner, 2023).

The contemporary political scene in Kenya continues to reflect the complexities of coalition politics. The 2017 elections saw the emergence of the National Super Alliance (NASA), which aimed to challenge the ruling Jubilee Party. NASA's formation underscored the importance of coalition-building in a fragmented political environment where parties must navigate both ideological differences and ethnic loyalties (Kuria, 2012). The ongoing evolution of party ideologies and coalitions in Kenya suggests a dynamic political landscape where historical legacies, ethnic identities, and strategic interests converge. As Kenya approaches future elections, understanding these dynamics will be crucial for analyzing the effectiveness and stability of political coalitions.

The historization of the influence of party ideologies on the development of political coalitions is a critical aspect that has not received sufficient attention in aforementioned research works. By specifically assessing the extent to which party ideologies have shaped the development of political coalitions in Kenya since 1945, this study aimed to contribute to the on-going scholarly discourse on the dynamics of party politics and coalition building in developing democracies.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study utilized a range of data collection methods, including questionnaires, focus group discussion, interviews, and document analysis of archival and secondary sources, to examine the evolution of party ideologies and political coalitions in Kenya since 1945. The appropriate sample size for voters was selected using a formula given by Yamane 1967 (Muyembe and Ikoha, 2023). At 95% confidence level $p= 0.05$, given as;

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n = the sample size

ϵ = the acceptance sampling error

N = the population size.

Therefore, the sample size of ordinary voters was $n = \frac{22,152,144}{1 + 22,152,144(0.05)^2} = 400$

The research aimed to survey a sample of 454 participants, consisting of 400 ordinary voters conveniently sampled and proportionally distributed across 18 counties grouped into four regions of the study area. In addition to the four hundred ordinary voters above, it was deemed fit to have four Focus Group Discussions of 8 members in each of the four regions targeting thirty-two extra ordinary voters, the sample also included eight leaders from political parties, six leaders from civic organizations, four leaders from the local intelligentsia for each region, and four experts on historical matters. This formed a sample size of 454.

The researcher employed purposive, proportionate, snowball, and convenience sampling techniques to gather data within a pragmatism research philosophy, political coalition theory and historical research design framework. The researcher utilized various methodologies for analysing and presenting data, including thematic analysis and content analysis. The researcher adhered to ethical guidelines in data collection and interpretation as necessary permissions were sought from relevant



authorities before the study began. Confidentiality and secrecy of the participants was guaranteed. Revealing of the respondent’s identity was done so with their consent by filling the consent forms of revealing their identity especially during verbatim quotations.

RESULTS

This section presents the response rate and the summary of the research findings on party ideology and development of political coalitions in Kenya Since 1945.

Questionnaire Return Rate

A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed to ordinary voters, across 18 counties grouped into four regions of the study area: former Western region (Bungoma, Busia, Kakamega, and Vihiga), six from the former Nyanza region (Migori, Kisumu, Homa Bay, Kisii, Nyamira). Questionnaire return rate is given in table 1

Table 1: Questionnaire Return Rate

S/N	Region	No. Targeted	No. Returned	Percentage
1	Western	67	58	86.57
2	Nyanza	95	83	87.37
3	Rift Valley	164	142	86.59
4	Nairobi	74	65	87.84
5	Total	400	345	87

Source: Field Data 2023

The findings in table 1.1 reveal that the survey achieved an overall return rate of 87 percent, surpassing the 70 percent benchmark set by Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) espoused by Njagi and Were (2018) for an excellent response rate. This high return rate ensures that the data collected is robust and suitable for a thorough analysis. The response rates across regions varied, but all were sufficiently high to support comprehensive and reliable insights from the survey.

The findings of the study on the evolution of party ideologies and political coalitions in Kenya since 1945 reveals a historical shift from ethnic-based pre-

independence ideologies to pragmatic post-independence alliances. KANU’s transition from African socialism to authoritarianism under Moi and the advocacy for democratic reforms by opposition parties like FORD depict the ideological transformations.

Contemporary politics in Kenya, marked by coalition dynamics, showcases a blend of ideologies within parties like NARC, ODM, and Jubilee Alliance, emphasizing diverse themes from social justice to economic development. The fluid nature of Kenya’s political landscape underscores the prioritization of pragmatic interests over ideological coherence within coalitions and parties.

The pursuit of power, coalition building, and governance demands often lead political parties in Kenya to prioritize pragmatic considerations over strict adherence to ideological principles. This dynamic interplay between ideology and pragmatism poses challenges such as blurred ideological lines, conflicting policy positions, and struggles in maintaining consistent ideological coherence.

Party ideologies in Kenya play a crucial role in shaping political discourse, policy agendas, public opinion, and fostering political competition. The diverse range of party ideologies offers citizens a spectrum of political choices, enabling them to align with parties that resonate with their values and preferences. Divergent ideological currents have played a fundamental role in orchestrating the formation, endurance, and dissolution of political alliances in Kenya.

DISCUSSION

Party Ideologies in Pre-Independence Kenya

During the period from 1945 to 1960 in Kenya, party ideologies significantly influenced the development of political coalitions, shaping the country’s political landscape. Various political parties and movements emerged with distinct ideologies that guided their actions and impacted coalition-building efforts. Ethnic-based ideologies were prominent, with parties like KCA and Luo Thrift and Trading Corporation (LTC) advocating for the interests of specific ethnic groups. These parties mobilized support within their communities and formed alliances based on shared ethnic identities, influencing the composition of political coalitions.

According to Ochieng (1995), nationalist ideologies also played a crucial role during this period, exemplified by movements such as KAU and the Mau Mau Movement. These parties embraced nationalist ideals, aiming to





achieve independence and self-rule for all Kenyan Africans. By uniting people across ethnic lines under a common nationalistic agenda, these parties facilitated the formation of broader coalitions driven by the shared goal of liberation from colonial rule. Additionally, Pan-Africanist ideologies influenced political coalitions, advocating for solidarity among African nations and the liberation of the continent from colonialism. These ideologies transcended national boundaries and contributed to alliances that extended beyond Kenya's borders.

Major Party Ideologies in Post-Independence Kenya

In Kenya's political landscape post-1945, major party ideologies have undergone notable shifts and adaptations, influenced by historical events, leadership changes, and evolving socio-political dynamics.

KANU emerged as the dominant party post-independence and initially espoused African socialism under Jomo Kenyatta's leadership (Kumssa and Jones, 2015). This ideology emphasized self-reliance, land reform, and African identity, aiming to address colonial injustices and foster economic development. However, KANU's ideological stance evolved over time. Under Daniel Arap Moi's rule, KANU shifted towards a more authoritarian stance, diluting its commitment to African socialism. The party's focus shifted towards consolidating power and maintaining a one-party state rather than adhering strictly to ideological principles.

FORD emerged as a significant opposition force in the 1990s, advocating for democratic governance, human rights, and equitable development. It stood in contrast to KANU's authoritarianism and aimed to restore democracy and political pluralism in Kenya. FORD represented a diverse coalition of parties and leaders with a shared vision for democratic reforms, albeit facing internal fractures due to leadership disputes and ideological differences (Kirwa, 2018).

NARC emerged as a coalition united against the long-standing dominance of KANU in the 2002 elections. Although not driven by a strict ideology, NARC symbolized a broad-based alliance advocating for democratic reforms, good governance, and social justice. It sought to address issues of corruption, economic development, and inclusivity within the political system. However, NARC's ideological coherence was challenged by internal conflicts and diverse member interests, which affected its policy direction once in power.

ODM was formed following the fragmentation within NARC; ODM became a prominent opposition party under Raila Odinga's leadership. It emphasized democratic ideals, social justice, and equitable resource distribution (Jonjo, 2012). ODM positioned itself as a voice against perceived injustices and sought to address issues of governance, corruption, and inclusivity within the political sphere.

PNU was formed as a successor to the NARC coalition, PNU initially emerged as a collaborative effort among various political parties, such as KANU, Narc-Kenya, Ford-Kenya, Ford-People, Democratic Party, Shirikisho, National Alliance Party of Kenya, among others, coming together to form a coalition. PNU encompassed a diverse array of political ideologies and interests under President Mwai Kibaki's leadership. PNU's ideological stance was characterized by a pragmatic approach, emphasizing continuity in governance, economic development, and infrastructure projects Karuri (2015). Its policies focused on maintaining stability and building on the achievements of the Kibaki administration.

The Jubilee Alliance, a coalition formed by TNA and URP, garnered significant support by emphasizing economic development, infrastructure projects, and unity among diverse ethnic communities. Led by Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto, Jubilee presented itself as a party focused on national unity and development, though its ideological coherence faced challenges due to varied regional and ideological interests within the coalition (Nakiboli *et al.*, 2017)

Coalition for Reforms and Democracy (CORD) was a coalition that comprised ODM, Wiper Democratic Movement (WDM), and FORD-Kenya. It emphasized democratic ideals, social justice, and inclusive governance. CORD aimed to challenge perceived injustices, promote equitable resource distribution, and foster political pluralism in Kenya.

NASA was a coalition formed in the lead-up to the 2017 elections, comprising several parties, including ODM, WDM, FORD-Kenya, ANC, and other smaller parties (Analytica, 2017). It sought to unite opposition forces against the ruling Jubilee Party. NASA's ideological stance emphasized electoral reforms, economic transformation, devolution, and inclusivity within the political system.

Amani National Congress (ANC) led by Musalia Mudavadi, positioned itself as a party advocating for national unity, economic empowerment, and social justice. ANC emphasized the need for inclusive governance,



economic policies that fostered growth, and equitable resource distribution to address Kenya's development challenges (Kadima and Owuor, 2014).

The ideological positioning of Kenya Kwanza was centred on advocating for progressive governance, economic transformation, and inclusivity. The alliance emphasized policies focused on job creation, infrastructure development, and innovation to drive Kenya's growth and development. Kenya Kwanza aimed to present itself as an alternative political platform that prioritized the interests of the common citizen and sought to address the socio-economic challenges facing the country. Kenya Kwanza, which translates to "Kenya First" in Swahili, stands as a Kenyan political coalition helmed by William Ruto. Its inception dates back to the period preceding the 2022 Kenyan general election. Initially, the alliance comprised three parties: UDA, Amani National Congress, and FORD–Kenya. However, additional political parties joined the coalition.

The Kenya Kwanza alliance, steered by William Ruto, emerged as a significant political entity in Kenya's political landscape in the lead-up to the 2022 general elections. This coalition placed a notable emphasis on the concept of progressive governance, signaling a focus on transformative socio-economic policies, inclusivity, and innovative approaches to steer the country's development trajectory.

The ideological foundation of Kenya Kwanza centered on the principle of progressive governance, highlighting the need for forward-thinking strategies to propel economic transformation. One of the primary focal points was a commitment to fostering job creation, seen as pivotal in addressing Kenya's unemployment challenges. The alliance emphasized policies and initiatives geared toward supporting entrepreneurship, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and sectors with potential for job growth, aiming to boost employment opportunities across various sectors.

Azimio La Umoja (One Kenya Alliance), a coalition led by influential political figures such as Raila Odinga, Kalonzo Musyoka, Gideon Moi, Charity Ngilu and Uhuru Kenyatta, emphasized unity, inclusivity, and national cohesion. This alliance aimed to foster a united front against perceived political injustices and prioritize issues such as economic development, governance reforms, and social equity.

These political formations encompass a range of ideologies, from democratic reforms, social justice, and

inclusive governance to economic transformation and national unity. However, each coalition or party often faces challenges in maintaining strict ideological coherence due to diverse member interests, pragmatic considerations, and the fluid nature of Kenya's political landscape.

According to voter respondents:

“...it is essential to note that while these coalitions and parties may espouse various ideologies, coalition formation and party membership is often anchored more on individuals or personal interests rather than strict ideological principles” (FGD in Kisumu-Kondele on 9th August 2023).

This observation suggests that ideological coherence within these coalitions and parties may come after the formation of alliances, driven by pragmatic considerations and individual ambitions rather than deeply held ideological beliefs. The fluidity and pragmatism in Kenya's political landscape sometimes prioritize personal interests and power dynamics over ideological consistency. This dynamic can lead to challenges in maintaining a clear ideological direction within coalitions, as the pursuit of power and influence may take precedence over adhering to a set of coherent principles.

Evolution of Party Ideologies

This section presents the concept of how party ideology has evolved in Kenya. The presentation was carried out under various subthemes as follows: Post-Independence Era (1960s-1970s); Period of Shifts in Ideological Stances (1980s-1990s) and Period of Contemporary Landscape (2000s-Present).

The Post-Independent Era Ideology

Kenya's independence in 1963 marked a crucial turning point in the nation's history, promising freedom from colonial rule and envisioning a future of socio-economic progress and equality. Central to this vision was KANU, led by Jomo Kenyatta, and its ideological framework of African socialism and nationalism (Forgwe, 2002). This ideology was crafted to address colonial injustices, promote self-reliance, and foster a united nation grounded in African identity. However, the practical application of these ideals faced numerous challenges, primarily due to the emergence of ethnic politics and the entrenchment of power within KANU.





KANU's ideological underpinning of African socialism aimed to reshape Kenya's socio-economic landscape, emphasizing self-sufficiency, land reform, and a collective approach to development. The ideology sought to dismantle the remnants of colonialism by advocating for African cultural identity, economic independence, and social equity. Harambee, an emblematic concept of collective effort, was introduced to symbolize the spirit of community-driven development. This initiative was intended to promote grassroots participation and solidarity among Kenyans (Ng'Ethe, 1983).

Under this ideology, land reform became a crucial aspect of the government's agenda. Kenya inherited a deeply unequal land distribution system from colonial rule, with large tracts owned by a minority while the majority of the population faced landlessness or inadequate landholding. Efforts were made to redistribute land to address these historical injustices. However, the effectiveness of these reforms was limited due to various factors, including resistance from vested interests and challenges in implementing fair and comprehensive land redistribution policies.

Despite the ideological rhetoric of African unity and socialism, the political landscape within KANU began to reflect ethnic favoritism and power consolidation among certain groups, notably Kenyatta's own Kikuyu community (Kariuki, 2001). This phenomenon contradicted the inclusive and egalitarian principles espoused by the party. Key positions in the government, civil service, and economic sectors were often filled by individuals from Kenyatta's ethnic community, raising concerns of exclusion and fostering discontent among other ethnic groups.

Gordon (2019) observes that ethnic patronage networks began to form within KANU, leading to perceptions of nepotism and favoritism. This trend intensified ethnic tensions and divisions, undermining the ideological vision of a united, non-tribalistic society. While the party advocated for a broader African identity, the realities of ethnic politics influenced policy decisions, resource allocation, and the distribution of opportunities, deepening societal fissures.

Harambee, while symbolizing communal development, suffered from inconsistencies in its implementation. Projects under the Harambee initiative were often biased towards regions and communities aligned with the ruling elite, perpetuating unequal development and intensifying disparities between regions. The notion of collective effort

in development initiatives did not always translate into equitable resource distribution. Land reforms, aimed at rectifying historical injustices in land distribution, faced substantial challenges. Despite the intent to redistribute land fairly, the actual implementation often favored politically connected individuals and those within Kenyatta's inner circle. This led to the accumulation of vast landholdings by a few, perpetuating inequalities and land concentration among the ruling elite.

Ethnic favouritism within political and economic spheres became more apparent over time. Key decision-making positions were often occupied by individuals from Kenyatta's ethnic community, creating an imbalance in representation and reinforcing perceptions of marginalization among other ethnic groups. Economic opportunities and access to resources became increasingly associated with political affiliations and ethnic ties, undermining the principles of meritocracy and equal opportunity.

A similar affirmation was by Noah Wekesa who noted that:

“Kenya's early post-independence era was characterized by the combination of ideological aspirations with the realities of ethnic politics and power consolidation. KANU's espousal of African socialism and nationalism, while aiming to address colonial injustices and promote unity, faced significant challenges in implementation. Ethnic patronage networks, unequal resource distribution, and inconsistencies in policy execution undermined the party's ideological ideals. The contradictions between rhetoric and reality highlighted the complexities and tensions within Kenya's political landscape during the formative period of the nation's history” (Noah Wekesa, Oral Interview in Kitale on 16th November 2024).

Additionally, The Weekly Review revealed that:

“...a more momentous coup for KANU was to come soon after the country became a republic, with Kenyatta as president, on December 12, 1964. KADU, then the opposition, was voluntarily dissolved and its members crossed the floor to join KANU. KADU's former leaders, Mr. Ronald Ngala and Mr. Daniel Moi were rewarded with cabinet seats. KADU had last achieved its primary goal of party unity...but divisions along ideological and personality lines soon emerged: an increasingly left-wing faction



within the party became evident and clearly revolved around Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, who was then the party and government vice-president. Kenyatta, Mboya and majority in KANU remained basically conservative. Odinga favoured an economic and ideological orientation towards socialism, while Kenyatta and Mboya stood for a market based capitalist foundation... (KNADS: The Weekly Review, June 8, 1990, "Kanu Power Consolidation").

The study observes that Kenya's post-independence era witnessed a complex interplay between ideological aspirations and the realities of ethnic politics and power dynamics within KANU. Despite the party's espousal of African socialism and nationalism to address colonial injustices and promote unity, challenges in implementation arose, including ethnic favouritism, unequal resource distribution, and policy execution inconsistencies. The contradictions between rhetoric and reality underscored the intricate tensions shaping Kenya's political landscape during this pivotal period in the nation's history. The amalgamation of ideological visions with ethnic patronage networks and divergent economic orientations reflected the nuanced complexities that defined Kenya's early post-independence trajectory.

Era of Ideological Shifts and Stances (1980s-1990s)

Daniel Arap Moi's ascension to power in 1978 following the death of Jomo Kenyatta marked a significant period in Kenya's political trajectory. Under Moi's leadership, KANU underwent a noticeable departure from the earlier principles of African socialism espoused during Kenyatta's rule. The once-prominent commitment to African socialism, emphasizing self-reliance, communal development, and equitable economic policies, gradually eroded.

Moi's administration shifted the focus away from African socialism, emphasizing instead a more centralized and authoritarian form of governance. This shift led to the concentration of power within the ruling elite, facilitating an increasingly authoritarian regime. KANU, once a symbol of national unity and African socialism, began advocating for a one-party state, consolidating political control and suppressing pluralism. This move towards an authoritarian regime stifled political freedoms, curtailed dissent, and restricted the space for opposition voices within the political sphere.

The authoritarian shift was manifested through various means, including the enactment of constitutional amendments such as the Section 2A amendment in 1982. This amendment declared Kenya a de jure one-party state, solidifying KANU's dominance and restricting the existence of alternative political parties or dissenting political ideologies. Moi's administration further perpetuated this authoritarian stance through political repression, with instances of harassment, detention, and persecution of opposition figures, journalists, and activists critical of the government (Brown, 2001).

By the early 1990s, mounting pressure for democratic reforms, both domestically and internationally, compelled Kenya to reintroduce multiparty politics. The authoritarian nature of KANU's rule had sparked discontent among the populace, leading to calls for political liberalization and the restoration of political pluralism. This period witnessed the emergence of pro-democracy movements and civil society initiatives advocating for democratic governance, human rights, and political pluralism. The pressure for change, combined with growing international scrutiny, pushed the government to yield to demands for political reforms.

Khadiagala, (2010) postulates that in response to the growing demand for multiparty democracy in Kenya, opposition movements coalesced to form alternative political parties. Foremost among these was FORD, which emerged as a significant opposition force, challenging KANU's monopoly on power. Led by veteran politician Oginga Odinga and other prominent figures, FORD stood as a symbol of resistance, advocating for democratic governance, equitable development, and human rights.

According to Musikari Kombo:

"The reintroduction of multiparty politics posed a formidable challenge to KANU's long-standing dominance. The emergence of opposition parties like FORD provided an alternative political platform, offering dissenting voices and a rallying point for those disillusioned with KANU's authoritarian rule. This shift towards multiparty politics signified a turning point in Kenya's political landscape, marking the beginning of a transition towards a more pluralistic and democratic system". (Musikari Kombo, Oral Interview at Lovington, Nairobi on 21st November 2023)

The foregoing analysis aligns with the pragmatic philosophy. The researcher observes that emergence of





opposition parties like FORD provided an alternative political platform, allowing for dissenting voices and a rallying point for those dissatisfied with KANU's authoritarian rule. This shift towards a more pluralistic and democratic system reflects the pragmatic philosophy's emphasis on the practical consequences of political changes and the importance of democratic participation in shaping one's social and political environment.

The study revealed that the 1980s and 1990s in Kenya witnessed a divergence from the ideals of African socialism towards an authoritarian regime under Moi's leadership within KANU. However, mounting pressure for democratic reforms led to the eventual reintroduction of multiparty politics, symbolized by the emergence of opposition parties like FORD, challenging KANU's dominance and advocating for democratic governance and pluralism within the country's political arena.

Era of Contemporary Landscape (2000s-Present)

Etyang (2021) remarked that post-2002 marked a significant shift in Kenya's political dynamics, transitioning towards a landscape dominated by coalition politics. This era witnessed a departure from the traditional dominance of single-party rule, as parties increasingly sought alliances and formed coalitions based on pragmatic interests rather than strict ideological compatibility. The political landscape in Kenya from the 2000s to the present has been characterized by a significant shift towards coalition politics, with parties frequently forming alliances based on pragmatic interests rather than rigid ideological alignments. This era witnessed the emergence of notable alliances and coalitions that reshaped the country's political dynamics.

One of the most prominent examples illustrating the shift towards coalition politics in Kenya was the formation of NARC (Tsuda, 2010). Established in the lead-up to the 2002 general elections, NARC brought together diverse political parties and leaders with the primary goal of unseating the long-standing dominance of KANU. NARC emerged as a formidable force in Kenyan politics ahead of the 2002 general elections, strategically uniting multiple political parties and leaders from disparate ideological backgrounds under a common goal ending the decades-long reign of KANU and President Daniel Arap Moi. This coalition brought together parties with varying ideological underpinnings, marking a departure from the conventional alliances based on strict ideological compatibility.

Mwai Kibaki, a seasoned politician with roots in the Democratic Party (DP), played a pivotal role within

NARC (Masime and Kibara, 2003). The DP traditionally leaned towards center-right ideologies, advocating for market-oriented economic policies and emphasizing private sector growth. Kibaki's leadership represented a faction of the coalition aligned with these economic principles, appealing to voters seeking market-friendly governance and economic reforms.

Raila Odinga, a prominent figure in Kenyan politics, spearheaded the National Development Party (NDP) and brought with him a support base predominantly from Nyanza Province. The NDP had a more leftist orientation, advocating for social justice, equitable wealth distribution, and greater government intervention in economic affairs. Odinga's inclusion in NARC added a dimension of left-leaning ideologies, expanding the coalition's appeal to voters seeking a more redistributive approach to governance.

Wamalwa Kijana, a prominent figure from FORD-Kenya, played a vital role in NARC during the 2002 Kenyan elections. His representation brought a distinctive emphasis on decentralization, regional autonomy, and equitable resource allocation, aligning with FORD-Kenya's historical advocacy for democratic reforms and inclusivity in governance. Kijana's focus on issues like devolution and ethnic minority rights within NARC expanded the coalition's appeal, particularly among voters seeking greater regional empowerment and a more equitable distribution of national resources.

Charity Ngilu was associated with the National Party of Kenya (NPK) within NARC. Ngilu's involvement with the NPK was pivotal as she championed issues relating to social welfare, gender equality, and grassroots empowerment. The NPK's platform focused on advocating for inclusive policies and progressive initiatives, aiming to uplift marginalized communities through social democracy principles. Ngilu's presence within NARC significantly boosted its appeal among voters who prioritized social justice and inclusive policies, aligning with the NPK's emphasis on addressing societal disparities and promoting equitable opportunities for all.

Despite the varied ideological foundations of its constituent parties, NARC's formation was primarily motivated by a shared objective of dislodging KANU's entrenched rule. This strategic collaboration allowed the coalition to leverage the strengths and support bases of each party leader across diverse regions of Kenya, presenting a unified front against the ruling party. While ideological differences existed among NARC's key figures



and their respective parties, they coalesced around a broader commitment to address issues such as corruption, enhance governance, and stimulate economic progress. This pragmatic approach to governance formed the nucleus of their electoral campaign and post-election agenda, highlighting a consensus on crucial matters despite ideological variations.

Ultimately, the success of NARC in unseating KANU underscored the potency of a broad-based coalition that transcended rigid ideological boundaries in pursuit of a common political goal (Kadima, & Owuor, 2014). However, the challenge of maintaining unity within the coalition beyond the electoral victory laid bare the underlying tensions stemming from differing ideologies, leading to subsequent internal rifts and fragmentation within NARC.

The post-2002 period in Kenya saw a continuation of coalition politics, with subsequent alliances being formed, dissolved, and reconfigured based on changing political dynamics and electoral interests. The emergence of alliances such as ODM, which resulted from the split within NARC, and the later formation of the Jubilee Alliance between the National Alliance (TNA) and the United Republican Party (URP) are notable examples.

The Jubilee Alliance, led by Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto, successfully formed a coalition that secured victory in the 2013 and 2017 general elections. This coalition reflected a pragmatic alliance between different parties and regional interests, highlighting the trend of political parties coming together based on pragmatic calculations to attain electoral success.

Orange Democratic Movement (ODM): The fragmentation within the NARC coalition led to the formation of ODM in 2005. Led by Raila Odinga, a key figure within NARC, ODM emerged as a significant opposition force. It attracted members disenchanted with the internal conflicts within NARC and sought to consolidate opposition against the ruling government led by Mwai Kibaki. ODM's formation represented a pragmatic response to the fractures within NARC, rallying behind Odinga's leadership to offer an alternative political platform. Despite espousing certain ideological principles, the coalition emphasized the need for democratic reforms, good governance, and social justice, appealing to a broad spectrum of voters discontented with the prevailing political status quo.

Jubilee Alliance: Another noteworthy development in Kenya's coalition politics was the formation of the Jubilee

Alliance, which brought together TNA led by Uhuru Kenyatta and URP led by William Ruto. This alliance was instrumental in securing electoral victories in the 2013 and 2017 general elections. The formation of the Jubilee Alliance marked a significant milestone in Kenya's political landscape, uniting TNA and URP, led by William Ruto. This coalition strategically united leaders with distinct ideological backgrounds and regional support bases, prioritizing electoral success over strict adherence to ideological coherence.

According to Bedasso (2015), Uhuru Kenyatta, representing the Kikuyu community, and William Ruto, hailing from the Kalenjin community, orchestrated a strategic alliance aimed at appealing to a diverse array of ethnic groups and regions. By leveraging the significant political influence and support bases of their respective communities, the coalition aimed to transcend traditional ethnic-based politics and create a united front to attract support from various regions across Kenya.

The Jubilee Alliance's approach wasn't firmly grounded in ideological alignment but rather focused on practical strategies to consolidate diverse support bases. Their campaign emphasized issues such as economic development, job creation, infrastructure enhancement, and national unity, prioritizing shared goals over rigid ideological principles. This strategy aimed to attract voters across different ideological spectrums who prioritized tangible improvements in their daily lives.

The coalition's success was evident in securing electoral victories in both the 2013 and 2017 general elections, showcasing its ability to mobilize support across ethnic and regional lines (Lynch, 2014). However, despite its triumphs, the alliance faced challenges in maintaining strict ideological coherence. TNA and URP brought different ideological underpinnings, with TNA leaned toward a more establishment-oriented stance, focusing on national unity, economic development while URP had a more populist and grassroots-oriented focus. These ideological differences occasionally led to tensions within the coalition, impacting policy implementation and decision-making processes during their governance tenure.

Commenting on the success of Jubilee alliance, Charles Matoke postulated:

“The Jubilee Alliance's success under Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto was rooted in its ability to mobilize diverse ethnic and regional support bases, transcending traditional ethnic politics for electoral victories. However, the





coalition's pragmatic approach prioritizing shared goals over ideological coherence presented challenges in governance and maintaining unity, exemplifying the complexities of balancing diverse ideologies within a political alliance (Charles Matoke" Oral Interview at UDA offices, Nairobi on 19th November 2023)

The political landscape in post-2002 Kenya witnessed a significant shift towards coalition politics, marked by alliances formed on pragmatic interests rather than strict ideological alignments. The formation of NARC ahead of the 2002 general elections brought together diverse parties and leaders, including Mwai Kibaki advocating for market-oriented policies, Raila Odinga championing left-leaning ideologies, and Wamalwa Kijana contributing to the coalition's diversity. This era highlighted a departure from traditional ideological alliances, emphasizing strategic partnerships and pragmatic interests, reshaping Kenya's political dynamics towards collaborative and inclusive governance approaches.

Ideology within Post-Election Coalitions

The Grand Coalition established in Kenya after the highly contested 2007 elections stands as a significant illustration of the dynamic nature of post-election coalitions amid diverse ideological foundations (Amadi, 2009). The elections of 2007 led to disputes over the presidential results, inciting widespread violence and ethnic tensions across the nation. In response to this crisis, a power-sharing agreement was facilitated, forming the Grand Coalition Government that brought together President Mwai Kibaki's PNU and Raila Odinga's ODM. The coalition's primary objective was to restore stability and foster national unity in the aftermath of the deeply divisive elections.

The Grand Coalition amalgamated parties with distinct ideological orientations. PNU, under Kibaki's leadership, was identified as more aligned with establishment principles, whereas ODM, led by Odinga, carried a progressive and reform-focused agenda. Despite these ideological contrasts, their collaboration within the coalition aimed to bridge these divides for the larger goal of ensuring governance, prioritizing national stability, and promoting reconciliation. However, maintaining strict ideological coherence within the Grand Coalition posed significant challenges. While the coalition was formed in response to an urgent national crisis, the differing ideological stances between PNU and ODM occasionally

led to tensions regarding policy implementation and decision-making processes.

In an oral interview with Herman Manyora, he contended that:

"...despite ideological differences, the Grand Coalition was chiefly focused on implementing reforms aimed at addressing the underlying issues that triggered the post-election violence. Key initiatives included constitutional amendments, electoral reforms, and programs dedicated to national healing and reconciliation. The coalition's priority remained steadfastly directed toward fostering national unity and stability, transcending ideological divides to address the aftermath of the election turmoil. (Herman Manyora, Oral Interview at Fountain of Knowledge UoN, Nairobi on 21st November 2023).

The experience of the Grand Coalition therefore, underscored the complexities of forging alliances across ideological lines amidst a political crisis. It showcased the potential for power-sharing arrangements to mitigate tensions and foster national unity. Nevertheless, it also highlighted the challenges inherent in maintaining strict ideological coherence within a coalition government, emphasizing the practical and adaptive nature of political collaborations during critical moments in Kenya's history.

According to Onguny (2020), the BBI in Kenya emerged as a response to the heightened political tensions and concerns over the legitimacy of the 2017 elections. After a prolonged electoral period that faced legal challenges, a significant portion of the Kenyan populace felt polarized along political lines. In this context, the BBI was proposed as a reconciliatory framework aimed at fostering national unity, addressing electoral grievances, and reducing political tensions that threatened stability.

The initiative notably brought together political figures who were historically seen as opponents, such as president Uhuru Kenyatta, leader of the Jubilee Party, and Raila Odinga, the leader of the opposition party, NASA (National Super Alliance). Their prior political rivalry had been marked by differing ideological stances and historical electoral competition. This collaboration between Kenyatta and Odinga was considered groundbreaking as it signaled a departure from the traditional party-based alliances and confrontational politics. Despite their differing ideological backgrounds – Kenyatta's Jubilee Party having a more establishment



orientation while Odinga's NASA espoused a more opposition-driven platform – both leaders opted to prioritize national unity and reconciliation through the BBI.

The BBI process encompassed public consultations, stakeholder engagements, and the collection of citizens' views across the country. Its recommendations aimed at addressing key issues such as ethnic antagonism, divisive elections, inclusivity, devolution, and shared prosperity. However, the implementation and reception of the BBI remained a subject of controversy and mixed reactions. Some viewed it as a genuine effort towards national healing and constitutional reforms, while others perceived it as a political maneuver to consolidate power or extend political terms. Despite the initiative's intentions to foster unity, divisions persisted among political factions and the public regarding its effectiveness and legitimacy. Ultimately, the BBI process faced legal hurdles, with courts nullifying the constitutional amendment bill and questioning the constitutionality of certain aspects, leading to its eventual discontinuation.

On the formation of BBI, Musikari Kombo noted:

“The BBI's attempt to bring together divergent political figures with differing ideologies reflected a significant attempt at unity-driven politics in Kenya, seeking to transcend traditional party-based divisions for the greater cause of national reconciliation and stability”. (Musikari Kombo, Oral Interview at Lovington, Nairobi on 21st Nov, 2023.)

The researcher observes that Kombo's remarks on the formation of the BBI in Kenya reflect key tenets of pragmatic philosophy. The BBI's attempt to bring together diverse political figures with differing ideologies, seeking national reconciliation and stability by transcending traditional party-based divisions, aligns with the pragmatic approach of prioritizing practical solutions over abstract theories or dogmas. This pragmatic approach emphasizes flexibility, pluralism, and a focus on achieving outcomes that improve the collective well-being of the nation, rather than adhering to rigid ideological positions.

Formation of One Kenya Alliance (OKA) Post 2017 elections in Kenya witnessed a notable shift in political dynamics with the emergence of OKA, a coalition composed of diverse leaders and parties aiming to collectively challenge established political forces. Among the key constituents of OKA were parties representing a

range of ideological orientations, reflecting a convergence of viewpoints for the purpose of gaining political leverage.

Musalia Mudavadi's ANC advocated for center-left economic policies, focusing on equitable economic growth, job creation, and wealth distribution. Kalonzo Musyoka's Wiper Democratic Movement emphasized good governance, national unity, and social welfare policies, aiming for political stability and economic progress. Moses Wetangula's Ford-Kenya historically championed social democracy, stressing issues like devolution and the empowerment of marginalized groups, with a focus on regional inclusivity. Gideon Moi's Kenya African National Union (KANU), under his leadership, aimed for centrism, prioritizing national unity and inclusive governance, departing from its historical conservative stance.

Range Mwita observed:

“The formation of OKA was a strategic move to unite these diverse ideological stances under a single umbrella, presenting a comprehensive platform addressing economic development, governance, social welfare, regional empowerment, and national unity. However, the success of OKA in the 2022 elections depended on its ability to navigate internal ideological differences and maintain unity while resonating with voters across the spectrum” (Musikari Kombo, Oral Interview at Lovington, Nairobi, on 21st Nov, 2023).

Range Mwita's observation on the formation of the One Kenya Alliance (OKA) aligns with political scientist Arend Lijphart's work on consociational democracy, which emphasizes the importance of inclusive power-sharing arrangements among diverse groups. Mwita's description of OKA as a "strategic move to unite these diverse ideological stances under a single umbrella" and its goal of presenting a "comprehensive platform" reflect Lijphart's consociational principles of grand coalition, proportionality, and segmental autonomy. However, Mwita's note on the need for OKA to navigate internal differences and maintain unity echoes Lijphart's recognition of the inherent challenges in managing conflicts within such power-sharing arrangements (Lijphart, 1977).

This coalition exemplified the pragmatic nature of Kenyan politics, where alliances are forged based on shared objectives and the pursuit of political power rather than strict adherence to singular ideological frameworks. The



ability of OKA to garner support and make a significant impact in the elections hinged on their capacity to sustain cohesion and effectively communicate their multi-faceted agenda to the electorate amidst a competitive political landscape.

The evolution of subsequent coalitions in Kenya, including the emergence of ODM, the success of the Jubilee Alliance, and the post-election realignments, showcases the prevalent trend of pragmatic politics. These alliances often transcend strict ideological boundaries, emphasizing the strategic pursuit of electoral victory and the consolidation of diverse political interests to attain political power in Kenya's dynamic political landscape.

Ideological Shifts within Prominent Political Parties

The political landscape in Kenya has witnessed notable shifts and adaptations in ideologies within prominent political coalitions over time. These shifts have often been influenced by various factors, including changes in leadership, electoral strategies, socio-political dynamics, and the pursuit of power. The study analyzed the evolution of ideologies within these coalitions to provide insight into Kenya's complex political dynamics:

Nyong'o, (2007) observes that during the formative years of Kenyan independence, the Kenya African National Union (KANU) under Jomo Kenyatta's leadership advocated for African socialism, a socio-political ideology centered on self-reliance, land reform, and the promotion of African identity. This ideological framework aimed to address colonial injustices and foster economic development. Kenyatta's administration introduced land redistribution initiatives and implemented educational and infrastructural programs, reflecting a commitment to the principles of African socialism.

However, following Kenyatta's passing in 1978, Daniel Arap Moi succeeded him, heralding a significant shift in KANU's ideological trajectory. Under Moi's tenure, KANU underwent a transformative shift away from the ideals of African socialism toward a more authoritarian regime. The focus shifted from upholding ideological principles to consolidating political power. The regime initiated measures that curtailed political pluralism and dissenting voices, leading to a repressive political environment. One prominent example was the constitutional amendment in 1982, which established Kenya as a one-party state, effectively eliminating political pluralism and dissent. This move solidified

KANU's dominance while suppressing alternative ideologies, thereby consolidating the party's power.

The Moi administration's approach emphasized control and suppression of dissent, resulting in severe restrictions on civil liberties and the stifling of democratic institutions (Gimode, 2007). Opposition figures, journalists, and activists critical of the government faced intimidation, arrests, and even torture, creating an atmosphere of fear and limited expression. Furthermore, independent institutions such as the judiciary and the media underwent increased state control, eroding their autonomy and impeding their ability to act as checks on executive power. These actions underscored a departure from KANU's initial ideological tenets of African socialism, shifting the party's focus towards the maintenance of authority at the expense of democratic ideals and social justice.

The evolution of KANU's ideology from African socialism to authoritarianism during Moi's rule represents a significant departure from the party's original principles. The shift in focus from socio-economic development and equitable reforms towards political consolidation and suppression of dissent illustrates how the party prioritized power retention over the adherence to its initial ideological foundations.

Voter respondents contended that:

“...the complexities arising from the amalgamation of parties with differing regional bases and ideological leanings can indeed lead to conflicts over various policy areas, making it challenging to uphold a unified policy direction. As such, balancing pragmatic political necessities with ideological beliefs is crucial in navigating these challenges within coalitions like the Jubilee Alliance (FGD at Kitale in Trans Nzoia County on 8th December 2023).

Concurring with the foregoing observations, voters in FGD remarked that the dynamic interplay between pragmatism and ideology significantly influences Kenya's political landscape, shaping governance strategies and emphasizing the persistent challenge of achieving consistent and coherent governance while accommodating diverse ideological perspectives. They emphasized the importance of addressing conflicts and working towards maintaining a unified policy direction within coalitions as crucial elements for effective governance and successful policy implementation in the midst of managing divergent ideological orientations.





Jubilee Party

The Jubilee Party, formed in 2016 through the merger of The National Alliance (TNA) and the United Republican Party (URP), initially espoused a center-right ideology emphasizing a pro-business approach, infrastructural development, and economic growth as its core agenda. However, the party's ideological coherence encountered challenges as its trajectory unfolded.

The introduction of the Big Four Agenda, focusing on manufacturing, healthcare, housing, and food security, reflected a blend of developmental and welfare-oriented policies (Etyang, 2021). While these initiatives aimed to stimulate economic growth, they also underscored a commitment to addressing social welfare concerns, leading to a mixture of developmental and welfare-centric policies. This amalgamation of different policy priorities contributed to a certain blurring of the party's ideological positioning, departing from a strictly center-right economic focus.

Moreover, internal disputes within Jubilee and alliances with entities holding differing ideological inclinations contributed to perceptions of shifts in the party's ideological alignment. One prominent example was the Building Bridges Initiative (BBI), where Jubilee, led by President Uhuru Kenyatta, collaborated with opposition leaders, notably Raila Odinga of ODM (Omulo, 2023). This alliance, aimed at fostering national unity and addressing governance challenges following the divisive 2017 elections, raised eyebrows due to the convergence of parties with differing ideological roots. Jubilee's partnership with ODM in the BBI process led to criticisms suggesting a dilution of the party's initial center-right ideological stance in pursuit of broader political objectives.

Additionally, internal disagreements and factionalism within Jubilee, resulting in rifts among party members and leadership, further contributed to the perception of the party undergoing ideological shifts. The emergence of different factions with varying views on governance, policies, and alliances depicted a degree of ideological divergence within the party, challenging its initial ideological coherence.

These instances collectively illustrated the challenges faced by the Jubilee Party in maintaining a clear and consistent ideological position. The blending of developmental and welfare-oriented policies, participation in alliances with parties of divergent ideological backgrounds, and internal disagreements all contributed to

perceptions of shifts in the party's ideological alignment over time.

Orange Democratic Movement (ODM)

Jonyo, (2012) posits that ODM under the leadership of Raila Odinga, has indeed portrayed itself as a center-left party, emphasizing social justice, democracy, and inclusivity. However, its ideological consistency has faced challenges, particularly in instances where it has engaged in coalitions or collaborations that required compromising certain ideological principles for political expediency or broader objectives.

One notable example of compromising ideological principles was ODM's involvement in the BBI. The BBI was a collaboration between President Uhuru Kenyatta's Jubilee Party and Raila Odinga's ODM, aiming to address various governance and constitutional issues following the divisive 2017 elections (Omulo, 2023). The initiative proposed constitutional amendments that sought to address electoral reforms, devolution, inclusivity, and other issues affecting Kenya's governance structure.

Commenting on the union between Jubilee alliance and ODM to forge the BBI agenda, Charles Matoke remarked that:

“While ODM historically championed democratic reforms, its participation in the BBI, which involved collaborating with Jubilee, a party it had previously opposed, raised questions about ideological consistency. By partnering with Jubilee, ODM compromised its stance as an opposition force and diluted its position as a check against the ruling party's policies and governance practices (Charles Matoke, Oral Interview at UDA offices, Nairobi, on 19th November 2023)”

ODM's participation in the BBI process led to perceptions of political maneuvering and strategic calculations rather than a strict adherence to its center-left ideological principles. Some of ODM's supporters and observers viewed the collaboration as a departure from its traditional role as a staunch opposition party advocating for clear ideological positions and challenging the ruling government. While ODM's involvement in the BBI highlighted the party's willingness to engage in dialogue and pursue national unity, it also raised concerns about potential dilution of its ideological stance in favor of political alliances and compromises.



This instance underscores the complexities that political parties like ODM face in maintaining ideological consistency while navigating the dynamics of coalition politics, alliances, and broader national interests. ODM's participation in the BBI process showcased the challenges parties encounter when balancing ideological principles with the need for political cooperation and achieving larger governance objectives.

Wiper Democratic Movement

The Wiper Democratic Movement, under the leadership of Kalonzo Musyoka, has exhibited a certain flexibility in its ideological positioning, often maneuvering between alliances that encompass different ideological orientations within Kenya's political landscape. Historically, the party has presented itself as center-left, emphasizing social welfare, inclusivity, and advocating for policies aimed at addressing the needs of marginalized communities. Its involvement in the Coalition for Reforms and Democracy (CORD) exemplified this alignment, as CORD, comprising parties like Raila Odinga's ODM and Moses Wetangula's Ford Kenya, emphasized democratic reforms, social justice, and rights advocacy, reflecting a center-left ideological leaning. During its participation in CORD, Wiper's alignment with these shared ideals was evident.

These shifts in alliances, where Wiper engaged with groups holding differing ideological orientations, suggested a pragmatic approach aimed at maintaining political significance and leverage. While the party predominantly projected a center-left stance, its willingness to form diverse coalitions indicated a pragmatic adaptation to Kenya's political landscape, where securing influence within various governments or alliances might have taken precedence over strict adherence to a singular ideological position. However, these strategic moves also invited scrutiny regarding the party's unwavering commitment to a specific ideological orientation, prompting perceptions of pragmatic politics overshadowing ideological consistency.

Amani National Congress (ANC)

The Amani National Congress (ANC), under the leadership of Musalia Mudavadi, has positioned itself as a center-right party in Kenya's political sphere, emphasizing economic policies aimed at fostering growth, job creation, and fiscal responsibility. However, the party's ideological consistency has encountered complexities due to its involvement in various political coalitions or alliances that

might not entirely align with its initially professed ideology.

One significant instance illustrating ANC's adaptations and strategic alignments was its participation in different political coalitions that diverged from its presumed center-right positioning. For example, ANC played a key role in the National Super Alliance (NASA) ahead of the 2017 general elections. As part of NASA, ANC joined hands with other opposition parties advocating for broader democratic reforms and social justice ideals. This collaborative effort within a coalition emphasizing progressive reforms raised questions about ANC's strict adherence to its professed center-right economic ideology.

Moreover, according to Range Mwita:

“ANC's involvement in the One Kenya Alliance (OKA), formed in 2021, highlighted the party's pragmatic approach to political partnerships. OKA brought together several opposition leaders and parties, including ANC, with the aim of consolidating opposition forces prior to the 2022 elections. Despite ANC's previous emphasis on economic growth and fiscal responsibility, its collaboration within OKA suggested a strategic move aimed at strengthening its political influence and electoral prospects, potentially surpassing rigid ideological boundaries for broader political objectives (Range Mwita, Oral Interview at CMD offices, Nairobi on 22nd November 2023)”.

ANC's engagements in these coalitions and alliances demonstrated the party's readiness to participate in strategic partnerships that might deviate from its originally professed center-right economic ideology. This adaptability and pragmatic approach underscored ANC's prioritization of political relevance, coalition-building, and overarching national interests over strict adherence to a singular ideological standpoint. These strategic alignments highlighted the intricate dynamics parties face in reconciling ideological principles with the necessity for political cooperation and achieving larger political goals within Kenya's diverse and evolving political landscape.

These major parties in Kenya have, at times, adjusted their ideological postures to navigate political landscapes, alliances, and electoral strategies. The pursuit of power-sharing arrangements, strategic alliances, and broader electoral coalitions often necessitates compromising on some ideological positions for the sake of political expediency or achieving short-term objectives. Moreover, Kenya's multi-party system and the need to build broad-



based coalitions to secure electoral victories have often led to shifts and adaptations in the ideological positions of major parties, reflecting a pragmatic approach to governance and political maneuvering.

Formation of Broad-Based Coalitions

The emergence of the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) in Kenya represented a pivotal moment in the country's political landscape, marked by the formation of a broad-based coalition uniting diverse political entities against the entrenched dominance of the Kenya African National Union (KANU). NARC's formation was a response to the need for a united front to challenge KANU's long-standing grip on power (Bosire, & Fiseha, 2022). While not anchored in a singular ideology, the coalition's formation underscored the pragmatic necessity of amalgamating disparate political ideologies for the shared objective of unseating the ruling party.

NARC's coalition comprised an array of parties, leaders, and interest groups, demonstrating a wide spectrum of political beliefs and motivations. The coalition brought together parties such as the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Democratic Party (DP), and smaller factions dissatisfied with KANU's dominance. These parties held varying ideological positions, ranging from advocates of democracy and political pluralism to those emphasizing good governance and economic reforms.

The unifying factor within NARC was the common goal of challenging KANU's rule in the 2002 general elections. The coalition's platform emphasized themes of democratic reforms, good governance, social justice, and the need to address issues such as corruption and inequities in the political system. The diversity of NARC's member parties and leaders allowed for a broad-based appeal to different segments of the electorate, creating a formidable force capable of challenging KANU's decades-long rule.

Holding a similar argument, Noah Wekesa provides:

“An illustrative example of NARC's success witnessed in the 2002 elections when Mwai Kibaki, the presidential candidate representing NARC, secured a landslide victory, marking an end to KANU's uninterrupted reign. The victory highlighted the efficacy of a diverse coalition in harnessing the collective strength of various ideological inclinations toward a common electoral objective. Moreover, NARC's ascendancy to power demonstrated the potential of cross-ideological alliances in Kenya's

political landscape. Despite not being driven by a singular ideology, the coalition's success underscored the pragmatic need to unite divergent political interests under a common banner for the greater objective of effecting political change and democratic transition in the country (Noah Wekesa, Oral Interview in Kitale on 16th November, 2023).”

The formation of the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) in Kenya marked a significant shift in the country's political dynamics, challenging the long-standing dominance of the Kenya African National Union (KANU). The coalition's amalgamation of diverse political entities underscored the pragmatic necessity of uniting varied ideologies to collectively contest KANU's grip on power. NARC's success in the 2002 elections, culminating in Mwai Kibaki's landslide victory, exemplified the effectiveness of a broad-based coalition in achieving a common electoral goal. This victory not only ended KANU's uninterrupted rule but also highlighted the potential of cross-ideological alliances in driving political change and democratic transition in Kenya.

Ideological Fractures within Coalitions

FORD emerged as a significant political force in the 1990s, driven by the shared vision of advocating for democratic reforms and equitable development. However, despite its initial cohesive ideological emphasis, FORD experienced profound internal ideological differences that led to fractures within the party, significantly weakening its impact and impeding its ability to maintain a coherent stance.

According to Okul, (2020), FORD was founded on the principles of democracy, human rights, and equitable development, seeking to challenge the authoritarian rule of the Kenya African National Union (KANU). It initially attracted a diverse membership base, including prominent leaders such as Oginga Odinga, Kenneth Matiba, and Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, united by their commitment to democratic governance and political pluralism.

Internal ideological rifts within FORD began to surface due to divergent leadership ambitions, strategic differences, and varying ideological orientations among key figures within the party. The differences became apparent during the run-up to the 1992 elections when FORD split into two factions: FORD-Kenya led by Oginga Odinga and FORD-Asili led by Kenneth Matiba. This split was primarily due to disagreements over party leadership and the direction of the party's ideology.





Reflecting on the split of FORD, Musikari Kombo noted:

“...FORD's internal fractures significantly weakened the party's impact and its ability to maintain a coherent ideological stance. The division led to electoral setbacks, diminishing its capacity to challenge KANU's dominance effectively. The split of FORD into multiple factions diluted its strength and undermined the unity required to enact substantial democratic reforms and influence policymaking. Moreover, the internal divisions within FORD highlighted broader challenges faced by political coalitions in Kenya, underscoring the complexities of managing diverse ideological interests and leadership ambitions within a unified political entity. The inability to reconcile these internal differences and maintain a cohesive ideological front weakened FORD's capacity to achieve its initial goals of advancing democratic reforms and equitable development (Musikari Kombo, Oral Interview at Lovington, Nairobi, on 21st November, 2023).”

Ultimately, FORD's experience serves as a poignant example of how internal ideological fractures and leadership conflicts can impede a coalition's effectiveness, leading to fragmentation, diminished political influence, and challenges in upholding a coherent ideological stance in the pursuit of shared objectives.

The emergence of contemporary political alliances in Kenya, exemplified by the Coalition for Reforms and Democracy (CORD) and the National Super Alliance (NASA), marked a transformative period in the nation's political landscape. These coalitions shared a common focus on advocating for democratic reforms, good governance, and the redressal of perceived injustices within Kenya's political system.

CORD, established in 2013, and amalgamated parties like the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), Wiper Democratic Movement (WDM), and FORD-Kenya, Njogu, & Wekesa, (Eds.)(2017). This coalition was driven by a commitment to championing democratic reforms and improving governance standards. CORD's primary objectives centered on challenging the existing political status quo by advocating for substantial electoral reforms and strengthening democratic institutions. Notably, the coalition engaged in various forms of activism, including street protests and legal actions, aimed at achieving electoral reforms following the contentious 2013 elections.

These efforts sought to bring about changes in the electoral body and laws to ensure greater transparency and fairness in future electoral processes.

Similarly, the formation of NASA in the run-up to the 2017 elections comprised parties like ODM, WDM, FORD-Kenya, ANC, and other smaller parties. NASA placed significant emphasis on inclusivity, striving to challenge perceived injustices while advocating for electoral integrity and social justice. The alliance continued the push for electoral reforms, actively engaging in legal battles and appeals to contest electoral outcomes and advocate for institutional changes to ensure free and fair elections.

Both CORD and NASA played pivotal roles in shaping the discourse of Kenyan politics, prioritizing democratic ideals, governance reforms, and the pursuit of social justice. These alliances mobilized supporters and stakeholders, advocating for reforms and holding the government accountable for perceived injustices. Despite facing electoral challenges and disputes, their existence underscored the significance of cross-party collaborations in advocating for reforms and fostering a more accountable and democratic political system in Kenya.

The formation of the Jubilee Party in Kenya represented an attempt to unite diverse ideological perspectives under a broad spectrum aimed at fostering national unity, economic development, and infrastructural projects. However, the party encountered challenges in maintaining a cohesive ideological stance due to the inherent diversity of interests within the coalition. The Jubilee Party, formed in 2016, resulted from the merger of several political entities, including the United Republican Party (URP) and The National Alliance (TNA). The amalgamation was envisioned as a platform to bring together different ethnic communities and political factions under common themes, aiming to promote unity and spur economic development across Kenya.

One of the central tenets of Jubilee's ideological spectrum was the pursuit of national unity. The party's rhetoric and policy frameworks emphasized the importance of transcending ethnic divisions and promoting a shared national identity. However, reconciling the diverse interests and historical grievances among Kenya's various ethnic communities proved challenging, often leading to tensions within the party.

Economic development was another cornerstone of Jubilee's ideology, with a focus on fostering growth through ambitious infrastructural projects and economic





reforms. The party advocated for initiatives such as the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR), road construction projects, and plans for industrialization aimed at stimulating economic progress and job creation. Nonetheless, the implementation of these projects faced criticism over issues of transparency, cost-effectiveness, and equitable distribution of resources, highlighting challenges in translating ideological goals into practical outcomes.

Moreover, the diverse interests represented within the Jubilee coalition posed challenges to maintaining ideological coherence. The party comprised individuals and factions with varying priorities and policy preferences, leading to internal disagreements and divergent viewpoints on key issues. This diversity sometimes resulted in conflicting approaches to governance and policy-making, hampering the party's ability to present a unified ideological front. An example demonstrating the adaptability and pragmatism of the Jubilee Party was its willingness to adapt to changing political landscapes and electoral dynamics. The party's strategies evolved in response to shifting alliances and electoral exigencies, reflecting a pragmatic approach aimed at retaining political power.

The issue of party ideology above, focusing on the challenges faced by the Jubilee Party in Kenya in maintaining a cohesive ideological stance were put to members of focus group. Voter respondents supported the position that the diverse interests within the Jubilee coalition posed challenges to maintaining ideological coherence. The party's composition of individuals and factions with varying priorities and policy preferences led to internal disagreements and divergent viewpoints on key issues, hindering the party's ability to present a unified ideological front.

On the other hand, voter respondents in FGD dissented from this view, emphasizing a different perspective on the matter. Their viewpoint diverged from the notion that internal disagreements and diverse interests within the Jubilee coalition significantly impeded the party's ability to maintain a coherent ideological stance. They likely presented an alternative interpretation or highlighted aspects where they believed the party's ideological coherence was not as compromised as suggested. The contrasting viewpoints within the focus discussion groups underscore the complexities and diverse opinions surrounding the challenges faced by political parties like the Jubilee Party in Kenya when it comes to maintaining a

unified ideological direction amidst internal diversity and differing priorities.

In essence, while the Jubilee Party aimed to encompass a broad ideological spectrum emphasizing national unity, economic development, and infrastructure, maintaining coherence within such a diverse coalition proved challenging. The party encountered difficulties in reconciling conflicting interests and translating its broad ideological framework into unified policies and actions that effectively addressed the multifaceted challenges facing Kenya.

Role of party ideologies in shaping political discourse in Kenya

Political ideologies have played a critical role in shaping political discourse in Kenya. The study sought to identify some of the ways in which party ideologies have shaped political discourse in Kenya:

Providing a framework for political debate

Lockwood (2019) posits that party ideologies in Kenya act as a foundation for policy formulation and influence the selection of topics for political debate. For instance, parties with a focus on economic liberalism may emphasize free-market policies, privatization, and deregulation, leading to debates on economic freedom, entrepreneurship, and market-oriented reforms. The Jubilee Party's emphasis on economic growth and development during the 2017 elections shaped the discourse, focusing on policies to boost the economy, create jobs, and enhance infrastructure.

Meguid (2005) observes that party ideologies play a critical role in electoral campaigns, where they are highlighted to attract voters and differentiate a party from its competitors. Ideologies help parties create a unique narrative and vision for the nation, ultimately shaping political discourse during the campaign period. During the 2013 elections, CORD emphasized social justice, equity, and inclusive economic growth, influencing the campaign discourse.

Party ideologies influence coalition building and alliances (Lynch, 2006) Parties with aligned ideologies are more likely to form successful coalitions, promoting their shared vision and policy agenda. Conversely, coalitions involving parties with differing ideologies may face challenges in maintaining unity and coherence. The formation of the Jubilee Alliance in 2013 brought together parties with



differing ideologies such as URP and TNA, necessitating compromises to establish a common policy framework.

Shaping public opinion

Party ideologies in Kenya provide the foundation for policy formulation and development. Ideologies such as socialism, liberalism, conservatism, or regionalism guide the development of policy agendas. These policy proposals and stances presented by parties shape public opinion on key issues. The emphasis on land reforms and social welfare by parties like ODM under a socialist-leaning ideology influences public opinion on issues related to land ownership and equitable resource distribution.

According to Lynch, Party ideologies create distinct narratives that resonate with specific segments of the population (Meguid, 2005). Different parties use their ideologies to create stories and messages that connect with the public, influencing their perceptions and opinions regarding governance, socio-economic issues, and national identity. The Jubilee Party's narrative in 2013 and 2017, emphasizing economic growth, development, and unity, appealed to a demographic seeking stability and prosperity.

Pius Mutai alluded to claims that:

“Parties use their ideologies to mobilize public support and create a sense of unity among their supporters. By aligning with a particular ideology, parties appeal to like-minded individuals and communities, consolidating their base and influencing their collective opinion on various issues... PNU mobilized support around a conservative ideology, attracting voters seeking a more traditional and stable approach to governance (Pius Mutahi, Oral Interview at Sirikwa hotel, Eldoret on 12th November, 2023).”

Party ideologies are communicated and propagated through media platforms. Parties use media to articulate their ideologies, policies, and values, shaping public discourse by setting the agenda for discussions and debates. Parties utilize televised debates, interviews, and social media to articulate their ideological positions, influencing public opinion on a range of issues. Party ideologies in Kenya shape political discourse by defining policy agendas, creating distinct narratives, mobilizing public support, and influencing media framing. They play a critical role in shaping public opinion on various issues, ultimately affecting the nation's political climate.

Kennedy *et al*, IJCR, 2024; 13(1) : 2 – 23

Influencing policy decisions

Party ideologies play a vital role in setting the policy agenda by defining core beliefs, values, and policy priorities. Ideologies guide parties in choosing policy areas to emphasize. For instance, a party following a socialist ideology might prioritize policies that focus on income redistribution, social welfare, and public ownership of key sectors. ODM in Kenya, embracing a center-left ideology, often emphasizes policies aimed at reducing income inequality, enhancing social welfare, and advocating for equitable resource distribution. This ideological orientation significantly influences the party's policy decisions and legislative proposals.

Haugerud (1997) argues that Ideological differences among political parties fuel policy debates and discussions. These debates showcase contrasting views based on distinct ideologies, leading to a richer evaluation of policy options. Public discourse on policy matters is significantly influenced by these ideological differences. During the 2017 election campaign in Kenya, the Jubilee Party, with a pro-business ideology, emphasized economic growth, job creation, and infrastructure development as core policy priorities. In contrast, NASA advocated for a more inclusive economic model that focused on social justice and wealth redistribution.

The study holds the view that party ideologies have a direct impact on how policies are implemented and translated into legislation. The ideology of the ruling party or coalition often determines the direction and priorities of policy implementation, as well as the legislative agenda pursued in the parliament. The implementation of free primary education by NARC government after the 2002 elections, aligned with their ideology of enhancing social equality and opportunity for all. Party ideologies shape public discourse by framing how policy issues are presented and discussed in the media and public forums. The framing of policy debates is influenced by the party's ideological lens, affecting public understanding and opinion on specific policies. During the 2010 constitutional referendum in Kenya, the debate on land reforms was framed differently by various parties based on their ideologies and interests. This framing significantly impacted public opinion and shaped the discourse surrounding land-related policies.

Fostering political competition

According to Elischer (2012), party ideologies in Kenya define clear policy agendas and objectives that guide their actions and campaigns. Different parties may have distinct

ideological stances, which shape their approaches to issues such as governance, the economy, social welfare, and more. ODM, with a center-left ideology, emphasizes policies that address income inequality, social welfare, and equitable resource distribution. This distinct ideological stance sets them apart and creates competition with parties advocating different policy directions.

Scoring the role of party ideologies, Japheth Ojijo postulates that:

“Party ideologies play a crucial role in shaping clear policy agendas and objectives. These ideologies define the party's fundamental beliefs and values, which in turn guide their policy goals and action plans. For instance, a party with a socialist ideology may prioritize policies that focus on income redistribution, public ownership of essential services, and social welfare programs. ODM, embraces a center-left ideology, which emphasizes policies aimed at reducing income inequality, enhancing social welfare, and advocating for equitable resource distribution. This ideological orientation sets them apart from parties with different policy foci, thereby fostering competition based on policy directions. (Japheth Ojijo, Oral Interview in Migori on 8th January 2024)”

Party ideologies fuel intense policy debates and discussions on critical issues. The ideological differences among political parties lead to vigorous debates that showcase competing visions and policy alternatives. These debates help citizens understand the various ideological stances and make informed choices during elections. The policy debates during the 2017 Kenyan elections were influenced by clear ideological differences. The Jubilee Party emphasized a pro-business approach, advocating for economic growth through private sector development, while NASA advocated for a more inclusive economic model focusing on social justice and wealth redistribution. These contrasting ideologies led to extensive policy debates, allowing citizens to evaluate and choose based on their ideological alignment.

Oloo (2010) argues that Kenya's political landscape is characterized by a diverse range of party ideologies, allowing citizens a broad spectrum of political choices. Parties with varying ideologies present contrasting policy alternatives, enabling voters to choose based on their alignment with specific ideologies and policy preferences. The existence of parties like the Jubilee Party, associated

with center-right ideologies, and ODM, associated with center-left ideologies, provides voters with diverse ideological choices. This diversity fosters political competition, as parties compete to attract voters who align with their respective ideologies.

David Burare argued:

“Ideological differences often lead to coalition-building efforts, particularly when parties realize the strength of uniting with like-minded parties to amplify their electoral impact. By forming coalitions based on shared ideologies, parties aim to consolidate ideological support and compete effectively against parties with opposing ideologies. NASA coalition formed for the 2017 general elections, uniting parties with aligned ideologies such as ODM and WDM. This coalition sought to pool their ideological strengths and enhance their competitiveness in the electoral arena. (David Burare, Oral Interview at Upper Hill, Nairobi on 23rd November 2023)”

The foregoing observation on the role of ideological alignment in coalition-building efforts aligns with the theory of political coalition, specifically the concept of policy-seeking coalitions. Burare's example of the NASA coalition in Kenya, uniting parties with shared ideological positions to consolidate their support and enhance electoral competitiveness, reflects the theoretical proposition that political parties form coalitions based on their shared policy preferences and the strategic advantage of pooling ideological strengths (Riker, 1962). The stability and durability of such policy-seeking coalitions are heavily dependent on the maintenance of ideological compatibility and the ability to resolve internal disagreements, as suggested by the broader framework of the theory of political coalition.

Conclusion / Recommendation

The overall conclusion of the study therefore is that the Kenyan political landscape has seen a shift towards coalition politics, where pragmatic interests and issue-based alliances have often taken precedence over strict ideological coherence. Parties have adapted their stances to address evolving socio-political dynamics, with a growing emphasis on development, governance, and national unity, rather than adhering to rigid ideological positions.





The study recommends to policymakers, political party leaders, and stakeholders in Kenya to prioritize fostering a deeper understanding of party ideologies and how they have shaped the development of political coalitions. By investing in educational programs, workshops, and training sessions that focus on the significance of ideological coherence within coalitions, policymakers and party leaders can enhance their ability to form more stable and effective alliances.

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