Rift Valley: The Struggle for Supremacy

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Abstract

The Rift Valley is Kenya's largest and most populous province whose diverse peoples and rich resources have led it to be central to Kenya's politics and development. The province has also been the site of intense political competition and even electoral violence. This chapter analyses continuity and change in the Rift after the devolution of authority to county governments. First, it looks at how devolution has created the foundation for limited and ultimately unsuccessful local challenges to the broader political coalition representing the Rift Valley's largest group, the Kalenjin. Second, devolution has led to electoral competition that has at times produced cross-ethnic cooperation, but at others has led to exclusion. Access to county funds and natural resources (like land, cattle and oil) have also fuelled local competition. Despite the changes, the 2017 elections revealed the staying-power of the status quo in Rift Valley politics.

Introduction

Under the old regional system, the Rift Valley was Kenya's largest and most populous province as well as being one of its more diverse and prosperous. It stretches from Kenya's northern border with South Sudan to its southern one with Tanzania. Much of the Rift Valley is the historical home of its majority Kalenjin ethnic group, the Maasai, Turkana and

Samburu (together KAMATUSA) communities, and other minorities and migrants. Together, these communities share fourteen counties in today's Kenya. In the North Rift, one can find some of Kenya's largest counties in Turkana, West Pokot, Samburu, Trans Nzoia, Uasin Gishu, Elgeyo-Marakwet, Baringo and Laikipia counties. Nakuru, Nandi, Kericho, Bomet, Narok and Kajiado counties make up the more populous and urbanised South Rift.

As a broader unified ethnic and political community, the Kalenjin are a fairly recent aggregation of a set of linguistically similar pastoralist communities from the region, but they have played a central role in Kenya's politics. At independence, they were a major faction of the country's opposition under the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU) party. After their political leader Daniel arap Moi ascended to the vice presidency and then the presidency, it has become associated with power.

This chapter asks how devolution has changed politics and identity in the Rift Valley. As in the rest of the country, devolution brought in a new set of powerful and resource-rich authorities in the form of governors, senators and members of county assemblies (MCAs) who used the resources in an attempt to attract loyal supporters in the lead up to the 2017 elections. This chapter will show how devolution has empowered more local actors and created new sources for claims based on local identities while simultaneously increasing political competition at the local level. Both within and between groups, devolution and newfound resources might be opening doors of recognition, empowerment and inclusion through county structures. Yet devolution can also encourage division and exclusion. Such processes, despite seeming antithetical, often go hand in hand.

First, this chapter will examine the struggle for supremacy in the Rift Valley between local actors in the South Rift and their national politicians. Through county politicians, Kalenjin sub-groups have begun to use local resources and legitimacy to challenge the authority of the broader Kalenjin alliance headed by the Deputy President (DP) William Ruto

(though so far without success). Second, this chapter will analyse local level rivalries. County politicians have sought attract new and consolidate old supporters and to create new coalitions to maintain power in the counties. At times, the heightened competition around new funds structure politics in a way that helps to overcome the many historical and fraught conflicts in the Rift Valley. But more often than not these new incentives seem to entrench old conflicts, create new ones or even promote exclusion by playing on the politics of identity.

Third, the chapter looks at the intensification of old conflicts in the North Rift since devolution and the politics of oil in Turkana. Oil had the potential to be a platform for development in Turkana. But it has also increased competition in Turkana county, leading to many similar local dynamics that occur in the rest of the Rift. Finally, it examines how, despite these changes, William Ruto has weathered such challenges in the lead-up to the 2017 elections.

Background: The Rift Valley until 2013

The term 'Kalenjin' translates as 'I say to you', and refers to the linguistically similar Kipsigis, Nandi, Keiyo, Marakwet, Sabaot, Pokot and Tugen communities. As a rising figure and aspiring politician in the late colonial era, Moi forged these groups into the broader Kalenjin alliance. In the construction of a Kalenjin community and narrative of Kalenjin unity, the Kalenjin have always been visibly engaged in debates about the obligations of elites and members of the group (Lynch 2011). Lynch shows that in the era of political competition both in the single party and multiparty eras, rivalries for resources have bred a different conception of ethnic identities and the rights and obligations that those identities imply. By moving power to the local level, devolution has brought changes in the calculus of in-group and out-group competition for the Kalenjin.

In the colonial period, the Rift Valley housed many European-owned farms in the area known as the 'White Highlands'. These agricultural areas still predominate across the Rift as small-scale horticultural farms, tea estates, ranches and large-scale food and flower farms. Both in the colonial and independence periods, many migrated to the Rift from other areas of the country – especially Kikuyu from central province – to work and use the land in these European areas. This led to ethnic diversity within the Rift Valley that continues to today, and the debate about what to do with the European settlements and farms had national repercussions.

At independence, the leaders of the Rift Valley and their allies in KADU advocated for a form of decentralisation in a bid to control the allocation of resources, especially land, within their own communities. But Jomo Kenyatta, Kenya's first president and the leader of the Kenya Africa National Union (KANU) party, won the first election in 1963, undid the *majimbo* (federal) elements of the constitution, subsumed Moi's KADU into KANU and made Kenya a one-party authoritarian state. Without the protection of federalism, the communities within the Rift Valley could not gain control over land allocation in their area. Instead, Moi allied himself with Kenyatta and facilitated the sale of European farms to those who could afford it. Kenyatta ensured that many communities from outside the Rift Valley, such as his own Kikuyu people, settled in the Rift due to their greater access to the economic and political resources required to purchase former European farms.

'Local' Kalenjin speakers and Maasai did gain large tracts of the Highlands, but much of the land went to elites across the ethnic spectrum and outsiders or remained in European hands (Kanyinga 2000). When Moi succeeded Kenyatta after the president's death in 1978 and took over KANU, the once pro-decentralisation communities of the Rift Valley began to reap the benefits of the centralised state. Still Moi returned to decentralisation in the 1980s, using a weak form of administrative (rather than political) decentralisation in the District

Focus for Rural Development to deliver resources to key constituents and circumvent the central Kikuyu administration (Barkan and Chege 1989).

With its history of migration, the present-day Rift Valley contains many communities which live and work across the region other than its pre-colonial KAMATUSA occupants, including substantial Kikuyu, Luo, Kisii, Luhya and Kamba populations (Boone 2014). The coming of multiparty elections in the 1990s thrust the Rift Valley and its diversity back into the spotlight. In the context of land politics and ethnically-aligned political parties (Mueller this volume), this diversity structured electoral incentives and tensions around elections. Moi renewed the narrative of *majimbo*, arguing that KAMATUSA communities should organise against migrants, whom they saw as foreign, occupying their land and as an obstacle to local Kalenjin political authority in the democratic era (Jenkins this volume). Multipartyism brought new contestation over political and economic resources, such as land (Klopp this volume).

During the elections of 1992 and 1997, KANU operatives threatened and attacked migrants who might vote for other parties, discouraging them from voting or forcefully displacing them so that they could not vote for Moi's opponents. In part because of this intimidation, Moi won the first two multiparty elections. By 2002, Moi had stepped down, and for the first time an opposition party won the election and Mwai Kibaki took office (Muhulla this volume).

The 2007 elections returned violence to the scene. Kibaki and his Kikuyu community faced a formidable opposition alliance under the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), with the Raila Odinga-led, Nyanza-based Luo joining forces with the Kalenjin faction. In the post-Moi era, William Ruto, a charismatic young Nandi politician, took the helm for the Kalenjin as Raila's running mate. Ruto had risen through the ranks quickly, having gone from KANU youth organiser in the 1990s to MP for Eldoret North in 1997.

After Kibaki won, ODM alleged rigging, triggering Kalenjin to attack his Kikuyu support base in the Rift Valley as well as violence between other groups across the country. The 2010 constitution emerged out of the power sharing government that was established to bring the conflict to an end (Ghai this volume), and introduced a system of devolution (D'Arcy this volume). Under the new dispensation, the Rift's fourteen counties each have a directly elected governor, senator and assembly.

Ruto and Uhuru Kenyatta, one of Kibaki's allies and the leader of KANU, were brought in front of the International Criminal Court for perpetrating the violence along with four others. In the wake of the indictment, Ruto abandoned Raila to form the Jubilee alliance with Uhuru. This enabled the co-accused leaders to campaign more effectively against their prosecution and empowered them to turn it to their advantage through a narrative of vicitimisation (Wamai this volume). This "siege mentality" united the Kalenjin and Kikuyu behind a common political goal and the Jubilee Alliance of Ruto's United Republican Party (URP) and Uhuru's The National Alliance (TNA) swept the Rift Valley with all but five counties voting over 70% for Uhuru over Raila and the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), and Jubilee candidates dominated local contests for MP, MCA, governor and senator.

Devolution and the Kalenjin Voting Bloc

With William Ruto campaigning for Kibaki against the constitution, the Rift Valley was the only former province to vote against it and its promise of devolution in the 2010 referendum (see D'Arcy this volume). In 2010, Kibaki relied on Ruto's ability to mobilise votes against the constitution, and in the 2013 and 2017 elections Uhuru relied on Ruto to mobilise votes for Jubilee. In exchange, Uhuru named Ruto his running mate in both elections and his successor to Jubilee's presidential candidacy for the 2022 elections.

Ruto's power within Jubilee has rested on his ability to deliver the Rift's votes, which in turn rests on his ability to control its politics. But he has faced multiple challenges to his supremacy from his own community, and many of these challenges have emerged from county figures. Yet while the Rift voted against devolution in 2010, since then most of its inhabitants have taken devolution as something that is worth defending against any efforts to recentralise power (Cheeseman, Lynch and Willis 2016). In 2015, 74% of the Rift's residents supported devolution, and although this is the second lowest proportion in the country (IPSOS 2016), it is still very high. The opposition sought to use the popularity of governors as a wedge to gain votes in the 2017 elections.

The next sections will outline how devolution has played out in the context of Rift Valley politics. Specifically, they will discuss how organisation occurred around new political parties, impeachments, by-elections and debates around historical grievances. It argues that the counties have empowered local actors and created a bedrock for claims that local representatives can make on their national counterparts.

The South Rift: Devolution and Debate

The South Rift's Bomet and Kericho counties are the centre of the Kipsigis community, which is the largest subgroup of the Kalenjin. Since devolution, a form of local Kipsigis opposition has emerged around representation and the issue of the South Rift's tea estates. Kericho and Bomet are two of Kenya's largest tea producing regions, but historically British and other multinational corporations have controlled the largest tea estates.

Colonial authorities had taken land as concessions in the 1920s from the local Kipsigis community and gave it to British tea growing companies, a loss that has served until the present as a point of grievance for the Kipsigis. In addition to the historical grievance over the confiscation of their land, many view the new multinational tea companies as

extracting money out of their economy while paying back very little. The multinational companies lease the land, but they are alleged to pay low land rates to local governments and local smallholder farmers cannot compete.

A relative political outsider, Paul Chepkwony, won the URP gubernatorial nomination and the 2013 elections on a promise to address finally the colonial injustice of historical land confiscation. In August 2014, the Kericho county assembly mandated Chepkwony to keep his promise to pursue compensation from the British Government for the tea estates in Kericho and Bomet. This led the Chepkwony to bring a lawsuit against the British Government claiming 2 trillion KSH in damages. The movement subsequently spread, with an MP in Nandi County moving to include the Nandi tea estates as well.

While the grievance may have its roots in the colonial era, the campaign was facilitated by the creation of a new tier of county level political leaders. By claiming to represent local interests and grievances, county authorities have gained legitimacy to challenge their national rivals. Kalenjin politics in the Rift Valley has long been divided between, on the one hand, those who claim to represent local Kalenjin and its various sub-groups' interests at the grassroots and, on the other, national politicians; the difference is that devolution has generated a new set of governors and senators who can give voice to local concerns.

From the beginning, Bomet's Kipsigis governor and former MP, Isaac Ruto (no relation), sought to challenge the Nandi DP William Ruto for his position as Kalenjin kingpin. With Chepkwony as Isaac Ruto's ally, the South Rift has pushed back against what they saw as the underrepresentation of the Kipsigis community within the broader Kalenjin political coalition in the URP. This has been a focal point of a broader debate concerning the utility of the Jubilee coalition for the Kalenjin that revolves around questions such as whether the Kalenjin receive fair representation and whether President Kenyatta is just using them as

convenient allies with no real intention of keeping his promise to allow William to succeed him as president (Wamai, this volume).

In this way, devolution generated greater political tension between national and county level politicians. Isaac Ruto used his tenure as the chair of the Council of Governors to spearhead an ultimately unsuccessful petition for a referendum calling for more resources to be allocated to the counties (*Pesa Mashinani*) before forming a political party of his own: *Chama cha Mashinani* (CCM). These names translate to 'money to the grassroots' and 'party of the grassroots', a choice that emphasises the types of appeals that county politicians made to their electorates. In addition to Isaac Ruto and Chepkwony, Gideon Moi, the son of former President Moi and the KANU senator for Baringo, has pushed back against the DP.

William Ruto retains many loyalists who support his aim to become president in 2022 and hope to benefit from the power he has drawn from his alliance with Uhuru. These MPs, senators and others see governors as powerful rivals. In the devolved era, political actors at the local and national level have been engaged in a multidirectional political game whereby they must both appease local interests fuelled by devolution as well as interests that move beyond one county that are important for national-level ambitions (Cheeseman, Lynch and Willis 2016).

At times, national level politicians have sought to undermine their rivals at the county level as evidenced by the attempted impeachment of Kericho's governor in May of 2014. After initial disagreements and a legislative-executive deadlock, Kericho's county assembly impeached Chepkwony. William Ruto and his ally Charles Keter – the Kericho senator – encouraged the impeachment process in a bid to weaken the growing Kipsigis alliance between Bomet and Kericho. But when Keter and the DP arrived in the county to share a stage with Chepkwony, local residents showed their support for their governor by loudly cheering Chepkwony. Elders also intervened in favour of Chepkwony at multiple points,

circulating a petition that garnered thousands of signatures as a show of support for the governor (Dyzenhaus 2018).

For Kericho, Chepkwony is *Timbelwet* – a nickname drawn from the name of the area his family had been evicted from in the colonial days to make way for a tea estate – and a crusader for compensation for the foreign-owned tea estates. Throughout the impeachment, Chepkwony emphasised that he was the leader of Kericho who had won the election and argued that he could not be ousted on the basis of the desires of Kalenjin from outside the county. Through this process it became clear that William Ruto had limited power to control governors through appeals to the party or on the basis of a claim about Kalenjin identity.

As DP, William Ruto was able to select four of the national government's cabinet secretaries. When his only Kipsigis cabinet secretary, Davis Chirchir of Bomet, the Cabinet Secretary for Energy, came under fire from the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission for his alleged involvement in the international 'Chickengate' bribery scandal in September of 2015, the government felt the need to replace him with a fellow Kipsigis. To avoid stoking the already tense South Rift, William Ruto promoted his Kipsigis lieutenant, Kericho senator Keter, to the position. This move made the South Rift feel included within the broader Jubilee Alliance, but created a dilemma: Keter's move meant that Jubilee needed to replace him in a by-election in a county that threatened to rebel.

Jubilee threw their full political force behind their new candidate, Aaron Cheruiyot, for the March 2016 by-election. Cheruiyot was Keter and Ruto's pick, and successfully beat the one-time KANU and ODM stalwart and former cabinet secretary, Franklin Bett, in the Jubilee primaries, proving that the DP could push past the old Rift Valley political elite. Yet the election was a test for the DP and Jubilee in a second way, as Cheruiyot faced off against a single 'opposition' candidate. Through an informal agreement between KANU, ODM and CCM, KANU fielded the sole serious opposition candidate in Paul Sang. Still, Cheruiyot won

with 65% of the votes and the DP weathered the storm. Politicians took notice, and the victory served as a bell-weather for the lack of success of CCM and opposition challenges in the 2017 elections.

Local Political Competition: Alliances and Rivalries

In addition to the internal Kalenjin conflicts, the competition in contests for county political and economic resources has brought new and perhaps more intense competition between groups. Alliances within more ethnically diverse counties may bridge gaps between groups, but they also create tension, rivalry and even violence.

While the Rift is home to many different communities, seven counties are all over three quarters Kalenjin, if not above 90%. But while the constitution asks that no more than 70% of any public service positions, including the assemblies and prestigious county executive committees (the CECs, i.e. the county cabinets) go to one ethnic group, each of these counties has broken this rule and appointed dominantly or exclusively Kalenjin CECs (Burbidge 2015; NCIC 2016).

In Kericho, the heartland of Kipsigis nationalism, there were active attempts to exclude minorities from being CECs or holding nominated positions within the county assembly, despite the fact that minorities make up nearly 13% of the county (Dyzenhaus 2015). All major government officials and representatives are Kipsigis except for one nominated member of county assembly (MCA), who is just one of 47 voices within the assembly. This reflects a theme that has emerged in many parts of Kenya: counties are for their majorities (Burbidge 2015).

When Chepkwony tried to appoint a Luo CEC, his assembly torpedoed the option claiming that by doing so he would undermine the role of the county as a Kipsigis political unit by giving a role to a member of Raila's community (Dyzenhaus 2015). Given the

precarious nature of his position due to the tensions that ultimately led to his impeachment and his role as a Kipsigis champion (Dyzenhaus 2017), Chepkwony caved and appointed a monoethnic cabinet.

The story is somewhat different in more diverse counties that have needed to 'balance' ethnic groups or create alliances between them. For example, Kikuyu make up half the population of Nakuru. Following the 2013 election, the county government involved an alliance that duplicates the Jubilee Alliance, with a Kikuyu governor, Kalenjin deputy governor and a cabinet balanced between the two communities that excludes opposition ethnic groups such as the Luo (D'Arcy and Cornell 2016). In turn, this "negotiated democracy" helped to keep a lid on tensions between these communities (Dyzenhaus 2015).

Local electoral incentives often structure inclusion. Nakuru, for example, is a county that is the site of many attempts to resettle Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from past episodes of electoral violence (Boone et al 2016). In one Nakuru constituency, the local MP and MCA met resettled IDPs with food, water and support. In contrast, the MP of a neighbouring constituency and his local MCA looked to obstruct IDPs' claim to land by settling their own supporters on that land as squatters. By claiming their supporters were residents of this land before it had been given to the IDPs, politicians hoped to earn some land as a reward for their supporters via a legal challenge to the settlement project. In the first case, local politicians viewed the incoming IDPs as potential supporters and courted them as such, while in the second politicians sought to obstruct newcomers to their areas to benefit their pre-existing base.

In Narok, the county's Maasai community narrowly outnumbers the Kalenjin and Kikuyu minorities within the county. While the Maasai may have been able to win the governorship based on their numbers, in 2013 a small and historically politically weak clan - the Siria - allied with the Kalenjin minority and won the gubernatorial ticket as the largest

Maasai clan, the Il Purko, voted for two different candidates (Boone et al 2016). Subsequently, the county has been plagued by interethnic disagreements along this line, with Maasai attacking Kalenjin at political rallies and over contested land in the Mau Forest. Further, many have interpreted efforts by the county government to review irregular land allocation on various ranching schemes within Narok as indicating that the county government is targeting the Il Purko clan and leaving the Siria clans' ranching schemes unscrutinised and the irregular land allocation within the Mau Forest to Kalenjin untouched (Boone et al 2016). Thus, the strategic cross-ethnic alliance within Narok led to political tension and the belief that various political decisions are ethnically motivated.

The cases of Kericho, Nakuru and Narok demonstrate how the new county governments have tried to manage their supporters to maintain power and legitimacy. In ethnically homogenous counties, minorities are often excluded. In more diverse counties, however, alliances emerge that include and exclude according to electoral incentives. Further, counties deal with past conflicts around identity along the new logic of maintaining their bases of supporters in the new ultra-competitive devolved system.

The North Rift: Old Conflicts and New Resources
The North Rift has experienced some of Kenya's worst violence in the devolved era. Yet while it would be difficult to draw a direct causal link between the changes brought by devolution in terms of identity and competition to these new instances of violence in the North Rift, its intensity and duration warrant discussion. Because of a drought in the region, pastoralist groups like the Pokot, Samburu and Turkana have moved south in search of grazing land and water. In Baringo alone, dozens have been killed and nearly 10,000 have been displaced by violence in late 2016 and early 2017 in cattle conducted by the Pokot pastoral community on the largely Tugen population. Pastoralists have moved onto and

occupied large ranches and private conservancies, often owned by white farmers, in neighbouring Laikipia, leading to the much-publicised death of a white rancher who was also a British citizen. Backed by MPs and MCAs, the occupiers mistakenly believe that the new constitution allows the government to take land owned by foreigners where their lease has run longer than 99 years. Pokot raids have also troubled residents of the Kerio Valley in Elgeyo-Marakwet despite the peace brought to the region before the 2013 elections (Elfversson 2016).

While factors independent of devolution, like the drought, arms trafficking and cultural practices have fuelled these clashes, political and institutional factors have also contributed (Grenier 2013). The electoral competition of the multiparty era increased cattle raiding in the North Rift as politicians began to manipulate local conflicts to suit electoral goals. Similarly, devolution has clearly brought some new competition dynamics to old conflicts. It has drastically increased the resources for which local actors look to compete. Large, marginalised and populous counties are allocated more central government funds, and thus the North Rift's large and poor counties are in receipt of many more resources relative to the pre-devolution era.

It is even harder to parse out the effects of devolution in Turkana, where the 2012 discovery of oil pre-empted devolution, and the new county became flush with investment and oil revenues. Turkana's oil led many to hope that development and jobs would end the historical marginalisation of Kenya's poorest region's (Johannes, Zulu and Kalipeni 2015). However, there are many concerns over how oil will affect Turkana. First, oil threatens the pastoralist way of life by fencing off communal land for oil ventures, leading to displacement, fears of land degradation, potential restrictions on the movement of pastoral Turkana communities and the concern that Turkana's communal land will be grabbed by 'outsiders' (Enns and Bersaglio 2016; Johannes, Zulu and Kalipeni 2015). Second, the mere

introduction of oil money has led to massive inflation in the county and has increased rates of banditry along the main roads in Turkana. Third, oil has refuelled old boundary disputes between West Pokot and Turkana given the resources at stake (Mkutu 2017). In 2013, a group of Pokot laid siege to the town of Lorogon, blocking its Turkana inhabitants from water and food supplies (Mkutu, Marani and Ruteere 2014).

Perceptions over a potentially unfair distribution of oil wealth have led to more conflict in the county. For example, the Turkana occupy few skilled positions, which go to foreigners and Kenyans from outside the county (Mkutu 2017). The unskilled positions the Turkana occupy are insecure, and many feel that the promises made about the wealth that oil would bring to the Turkana are empty (Enns and Bersaglio 2016). This has engendered a feeling of distrust of the oil industry as dominated by *emoit*, or foreigners and Kenyans from outside of Turkana (Mkutu 2017). As a result, there have been many violent protests against these non-resident employees at oil sites, and oil companies have had to airlift their employees out of danger. Development resources lead to new forms of social stratification and marginalisation in Turkana (Enns and Bersaglio 2016), and it is unclear how these will play out.

To allay these tensions, the proposed Petroleum Bill stipulates that the public profits from the oil reserves in the county will be shared between various stakeholders, with the national government receiving 75%, the county receiving 20% and local communities around the oil producing areas receiving 5% (Mkutu 2017). Yet so far there are few accountability structures relating to the allocation of these resources by the county government, leading to questions as to whether certain clans or regions might be favoured. As in other parts of Africa, oil resources could therefore lead to greater intra-ethnic competition and resentment in Turkana (Mkutu, Marani and Ruteere 2014).

The Turkana county government was led by an ODM governor, Joseph Nanok. This

division between national 'outsider' oil employees and local 'insider' Turkana residents has led ODM and Jubilee to engage in battle over the oil issue. When the President suggested that the National Assembly reduce the counties' profit share in the Petroleum Bill to 5% in February 2017, Nanok received the support of Odinga and the ODM in his challenge that the national government was unconstitutionally encroaching on county resources (Githae 2017).

This exchange shows that as in Kericho and Bomet, county politics has given the governor a platform to stand up to national-level figures and stake a claim to legitimacy and resources at the county level. But the politics in Turkana also show that, like Kericho, internal competition between the Turkana majority and non-Turkana migrants is also fierce, as the Turkana seek exclusive control over government.

The 2017 Elections: Ruto Holds the Rift

Despite the machinations around the South Rift, Jubilee largely held its own in local and national contests in the Rift Valley. Isaac Ruto took CCM officially over to the opposition camp in early 2017, knowing that Jubilee would object to the existence of a local party in the South Rift. Raila reached out and included him as a 'principal' in his National Super Alliance (NASA) coalition and hoped to use Isaac to gain a foothold in the Rift.

Yet it was clear that of the five NASA principals from across Kenya, the latecomer Isaac Ruto was the fifth most important. Raila promised him the position of 'Deputy Prime Minister', which many saw as a sub-par and unconstitutional prize as Kenya does not even have a prime minister for whom Isaac could deputise. Around the South Rift, Kalenjin were largely faced with a simple choice: do we pick William Ruto who would be the second-in-command or do we pick Isaac Ruto and get fifth place? A simple calculation seemed to win William Ruto the votes in his Kalenjin backyard: 2nd is better than 5th.

For the 2017 elections, Isaac Ruto was left out in the cold and lost badly to Jubilee's

Joyce Laboso in the gubernatorial elections. His CCM party also caused local level rivalry in Narok, where NASA ODM and CCM candidates once again split the opposition Maasai vote for Jubilee's Tunai, who edged the election with 52% of the vote. Throughout the campaigning process, Raila struggled to balance the interests of his own ODM gubernatorial candidate against his ally Isaac Ruto's desire to make Narok one of CCM's stronghold's through a CCM governor. Instead, there was bickering between the CCM and ODM candidates over official endorsements from Raila.

Those who did not move to the opposition fared better. Gideon Moi and KANU seemed to toy with the idea of supporting NASA, but instead endorsed Jubilee at the presidential level. With his more cautious strategy, Moi retained his senatorial position and hopes to use it as a platform to challenge the DP in 2022. Chepkwony, tamed by his impeachment, also became quieter and distanced himself from Isaac Ruto. Keeping his status as a local champion, Chepkwony soundly beat the Keter and Ruto-backed Richard Kipkoech in the nominations in April of 2017, as Kericho residents saw Kipkoech a corrupt imposition from above.

All in all, these victories show that William Ruto held his own. Explicit local challenges to the DP's supremacy backfired, with Isaac Ruto's CCM party winning just two MP seats in the South Rift. Further, the intervention of local Kalenjin parties split the vote in Narok, with CCM actually hurting the opposition's chances in local races. Those who kept closer to Jubilee fared better. KANU won most of its 10 MP positions, two senate seats and one governor in North Rift contests. Chepkwony, contesting on a Jubilee ticket and distancing himself from CCM and Isaac Ruto, kept his seat.

ODM and its allies could not gain a serious foothold in the Rift, with Nanok in Turkana holding onto ODM's sole gubernatorial seat, fending off a stern challenge from one of Uhuru's former cabinet secretaries, John Munyes. But most importantly, if one is to

believe the results of the 2017 August presidential elections, Raila's alliance with CCM barely registered in terms of votes won in Kalenjin areas. ODM only secured three MP seats across the Rift Valley, taking NASA's total to five, and Raila only saw a noticeable increase in vote share in two constituencies: the Bomet constituency from which Isaac Ruto hails and a constituency in Baringo with a victorious KANU MP.

While the William Ruto once again delivered the votes, there are still challenges in his backyard. Along with Chepkwony's continued success and Moi's survival as a challenger, the 2017 election in Uasin Gishu shows that Ruto cannot control everything. After his sour experiences with Isaac Ruto and Chepkwony, Ruto had sought to put his own loyal candidates in for governor across the Rift Valley, who could then back his presidential bid in 2022.

This strategy worked in places such as Nakuru, where the incumbent lost the nominations, but Ruto's choice for the Jubilee gubernatorial ticket in Uasin Gishu, Bundotich Zedekiah Kiprop (Buzeki), lost to the incumbent Jubilee governor Jackson Mandago. Buzeki ran against Mandago as an independent candidate, and Mandago claimed that Ruto had continued to sponsor Buzeki. Worryingly for Ruto, Mandago began to push back against the keystone of the Jubilee Alliance and thus the bedrock for his presidential bid: the Kikuyu-Kalenjin partnership. In the lead up to the elections, Mandago accused 'outsiders', a euphemism for Uasin Gishu's large Kikuyu population, of supporting Buzeki and warned them to reconsider that support.

Conclusion

Devolution has brought new resources and a proliferation of politicians to the local level. In the Rift Valley, local actors have sought to fashion a place for themselves by challenging their rivals at the national level with claims of local legitimacy while also establishing

political authority through alliances and exclusion and controlling both new and old resources. However, despite the power of these new actors, the status quo in the Rift Valley has held.

Through the case of the Kipsigis governors' challenge to William Ruto, this chapter demonstrates that devolution empowered local identities and refuelled debates around accountability, representation and opposition within the Kalenjin community. This change, however, is related to a second feature of the newfound competition in the Rift Valley: the politics of exclusion. Majorities in most counties often allocate all key positions to their community and neglect the minorities in their counties, as can be demonstrated in the prevalence of mono-ethnic cabinets.

New electoral incentives at the county level have also led some politicians to seek out new constituencies and alliances. This can be seen in Narok and Nakuru, where unexpected alliances have taken root in the counties with the 2017 election in mind. Sometimes they court new voters, like the cross-ethnic Siria-Kalenjin alliance in Narok and the MP and MCA who welcomed IDPs. But equally, these alliances can be divisive, as in the backlash against the Narok alliance and in challenges to IDPs' claims to land. Devolution may have intensified conflict in the North Rift, just as the introduction of multiparty politics did back in the 1990s. The final case of Turkana reveals how identity, competition and resources play out in one of Kenya's most historically marginalised and poorest regions.

But despite all these obstacles William Ruto has maintained his position as the leader of the Rift and the Kalenjin. Relying once again on his ability to deliver votes to Uhuru and power to his base, the DP has fended off challenges and set the stage for a bid for the presidency in 2022. What remains to be seen is whether William Ruto can maintain his position as the victorious leader of the Kalenjin and heir to Uhuru until that time.

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