"The Name of the Game": A Framing Analysis of Media Reporting on the 2007 Kenyan Post-Election Violence

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Alexandra Doles
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"The Name of the Game": A Framing Analysis of Media Reporting on the 2007 Kenyan
Post-Election Violence

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis examines how four online news sources (MSN.com, FOX.com, CNN.com, and BBC.com) framed the conflict in Kenya during the 2007 Post-Election Violence. A content analysis and framing analysis of 36 online news articles concluded that (1) report framing has improved in comparison to reporting done on the Rwandan genocide in 1994; and (2) while reporting has improved, more improvements are needed since reports still promoted a primordial understanding of the conflict.

Approved: ________________________________

Elizabeth F. Collins

Associate Professor of Classics and World Religions
This thesis is dedicated to my family,

who have been there for me every step of the way and have

always pushed me to aim higher
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my deep appreciation of my committee: Dr. Elizabeth Collins, who took me under her wing from the very beginning; Dr. Edna Wangui, who provided the insight into Kenyan life that I would not have understood otherwise; and Dr. Haley Duschinski, whose class taught me the importance of the media and social action.

I would also like to thank the Dr. Jie-li Li, all of my professors at Ohio University, the International Development Studies Program, and those at the Yamada International House, who have been there every step of the way, answered all of my questions and concerns, provided the opportunity to expand my knowledge, and fueled my desire to make a positive change in the world.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to analyze how Western media portrayed the violence following the 2007 Kenyan presidential elections from December 27, 2007 to January 4, 2008. Following the Kenyan Presidential elections on Dec. 27, 2007, riots broke out in certain areas in Kenya. Within the first week, a number of different framings began to emerge. The media took on four types of frames when discussing those involved and the violence itself: the violence was political, ethnic, social, or was instituted by the police. This paper means to analyze how Western media framed this conflict in relation to the perpetrators, the victims, and the violence itself through both content analysis and thematic analysis.

Case Study: Kenya

The Kenyan presidential elections and subsequent crisis was chosen for this project for a number of reasons. First, Kenya is generally considered to be a stable democratic nation that is strategically placed in Eastern Africa. The 2007 elections were supposed to be an example of the success of democracy in Africa and in East Africa, as a model for other African nations. It was for this reason that the violence following the botched vote counting was considered to be so shocking to the West. Second, reporting on this event seemed to shift between framing it as the result of political and social tensions and as the result of ethnic tensions. This was partly due to the nature of conflicts in neighboring nations, which greatly influenced how this conflict was reported. Lastly, the violence following the elections was a very recent event and, while widely reported,
has not been fully researched, especially in relation to media framing. Thus, there were a large number of sources that could be utilized in analyzing and understanding the media’s reporting of the conflict as well as providing a rather unique study on Kenyan politics.

For this research project, a nine day period (12/27/2007-1/4/2008) was analyzed. This period was the start of the conflict and showcases how the conflict quickly shifted from being understood as political and, in some cases, social in nature to being ethnic in nature. The analysis of this period shows some of the current problems facing conflict scholars and journalists in finding the ‘cause’ of conflict in Africa, for example if the cause is primordial, instrumental, or constructivist in nature.

Table 1: Timeline of Events from 12/27/2007-1/4/2008

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12/27/2007</td>
<td>Voters elect a new president and parliament.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/30/2007</td>
<td>The Electoral Commission declares Mwai Kibaki winner of the presidential election. He is hurriedly sworn in. Raila Odinga’s opposition Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) wins the biggest number of seats in the parliamentary election.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/31/2007</td>
<td>Streets are flooded with security forces and a ban on live TV broadcasts after riots convulse the nation is maintained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/1/2008</td>
<td>A mob sets fire to a church, killing about 30 people from Kibaki’s Kikuyu ethnic group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/2/2008</td>
<td>The government accuses Odinga’s backers of “ethnic cleansing” as the death toll from tribal violence increases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/4/2008</td>
<td>Kibaki says he will accept a rerun of the disputed election if a court orders it. The United Nations says the unrest has uprooted 250,000 people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Questions

1. How did Western media frame the post-election violence in Kenya?
2. What issues were or were not addressed by the media when framing this conflict?
3. How did reporting on the Kenyan case compare to reporting done on the Rwandan genocide?

Summary

Chapter 2 will be a literature review focusing on theories concerning media framing and ethnicity. Chapter 3 will analyze each of the media sources individually to see any trends that appear within the articles. Chapter 4 will analyze the media sources as a whole.

Significance

This study is significant in a number of ways. First, this will be one of the first studies conducted on how Western media framed the conflict following the 2007 Kenyan presidential elections. Second, this study will contribute to research already conducted on media framing and ethnic conflict by analyzing how major ethnic conflict theories appeared in Western media during the time period analyzed in this project. Lastly, it will show that although Western media has improved its reporting methods and has tried to look at other causes of conflict beyond the simplistic ‘ethnic’ answer, more needs to be done to give readers unbiased reporting in those initial days of a conflict. In the case of Kenya, although ethnicity does play a role in politics, the media should have also spent
an equal amount of time looking at the historical roots of the conflict in so far as politics, economics, and social factors contributed to the conflict.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Media Framing

Frames are a “central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events” and “represent a set of ideas that interpret, define, and give meaning to social and cultural phenomenon” and thus allows the media and individuals to “rely on, to convey, interpret, and evaluate information” (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Baylor, 1996; Scheufele, 1999, Neuman et al., 1992). On the one hand, mass media have a strong impact by constructing social reality, that is, by framing images in ways that are familiar to the audience (McQuail, 1994). On the other hand, media effects are limited by an interaction between mass media and recipients, creating ties between the reporter and the audience and between the social and cultural realms and events (Tuchman, 1978; Friedland & Zhong, 1996; Entman, 1993; Semetko, 2000). Scheufele (1999) summarizes the overall effect of media framing as follows: “The framing presentation of events and news in the mass media can thus systematically affect how recipients of the news come to understand these events” (Scheufele, 1999, 107). Media frames allow the journalist to organize the world so that they themselves can understand what they are reporting and “to package it for efficient relay to their audiences” so that their viewers/readers can understand what is being reported but it is up to the viewers/readers what to do with that information (Scheufele, 1999, 104; Gitlin, 1980).

Framing Studies

A rather impressive number of studies have been conducted concerning the media’s effects on the public. As stated by McQuail (1994), “the entire study of mass
communication is based on the premise that the media have significant effects” (p. viii). Pan and Kosicki (1993) explain the distinction between framing analysis and the rather similar agenda-setting research: “Framing analysis shares with agenda-setting research a focus on the relationship between public policy issues in the news and the public perceptions of these issues” (p. 63). However, framing analysis “expands beyond agenda-setting research into what people talk or think about by examining how they think and talk about issues in the news (Pan and Kosicki, 1993, 64).

There are two approaches to conducting framing analysis. The inductive approach “involves analyzing a news story with an open view to attempt to reveal the array of possible frames, beginning with very loosely defined preconceptions of these frames” (Semetko, 2000, 94). Although the inductive approach can better detect the variety of ways an issue can be framed, it is also extremely labor intensive and thus is often used on a small number of samples and tends to be difficult to replicate (Semetko, 2000, 94). The deductive approach “involves predefining certain frames as content analytic variables to verify the extent to which these frames occur in the news” (Semetko, 2000, 94-95). While this approach can be easily replicated and can be used on rather large samples, the researcher must have a clear idea of the types of frames likely to appear. This approach is best used when the researcher is trying to identify differences between media or within media (Semetko, 2000, 94-95).
Media Framing and its Effect on the Public/Public Opinion

The effects of media framing may be discussed in terms of effects on public opinion (general public) and on public policy (the government, military, and elites who decide public policy). Many studies have found that there are strong correlations between media content, policy-making decisions, and public opinion; although there are arguments as to just how strong that correlation is (Bloch-Elkon, 2007; Auerbach & Bloch-Elkon, 2005; Robinson, 2001; Baylor, 1996; Fein, 2000; Wilhelm, 1999).

Public Opinion

Media agents (i.e. journalists) will use frames that are familiar and resonate with both themselves and the public, thus actively setting “the frames of reference that readers or viewers use to interpret and discuss public events...at the same time, people’s information processing and interpretation are influenced by preexisting meaning structures or schema” (Scheufele, 1999, 105). There are some contestations as to just how much of an impact the media has on shaping public opinion. Scheufele (1999) explains that the public’s response to an event relies on the type of viewer that is watching the media’s reporting. He lists three types of news processing: “(1) the active viewer: the individual seeks out additional sources based on the assumption that mass-mediated information in general, is incomplete, slanted, or in other ways colored by the intentions of the communicator; (2) the reflective viewer: the individual ponders or thinks about information they gather from mass media, or they talk to others about what they have learned from mass media to understand fully what they learned; (3) the selective viewer: the individual uses mass media only to seek information relevant to them. They skim
over or ignore irrelevant or uninteresting content” (p. 103). Thus, it is not only the event itself which mobilizes the public, but mobilization also depends on the type of viewer that is receiving the information. The reaction on the part of the viewer can also depend on the type of story being told. For example, responses to Bosnia were very different from responses to Rwanda.

The CNN Effect refers to claims that the 24-hour cable news channel had a dramatic effect on U.S. foreign policy after the Gulf War in the 1990s (Robinson, 2002). Wittkopf (1999) states that some academics believe that CNN has radically changed how U.S. foreign policy is conducted as “officials must respond almost immediately to developments. Policy makers no longer have the luxury of ignoring far away crises...CNN has changed governance, shrinks decision making time, and opens up military operations to public scrutiny but this is not the same as saying that it determines policy” (p. 87).

Wheeler (2000) argues that “media coverage does not cause or force policy-makers to intervene but rather enables policy-makers to intervene by building public support. The implication here is that policy makers are motivated to intervene for non-media related reasons but require dramatic media coverage to help gain domestic support” (Wheeler, 2000, 164). Robinson continues “in situations where governments have already decided, for reasons unrelated to the media, to intervene, empathy coverage functions to support the policy of intervention” (p.-30). Policy makers might also decide to intervene because they believe that inaction will ultimately lead to negative news
media publicity and public reaction (Robinson, 2002, 40). Media coverage thus becomes a significant factor in influencing policy-makers’ decision to act (Robinson, 2002, 38).

However, studies conducted on the media’s reporting of the Rwandan genocide have raised questions as to the true extent of the CNN Effect. Wittkopf (1999) states that “poignant and memorable pictures of Rwanda did not inspire a surging public demand to do much of anything…whatever the pictures showed, the public saw no serious threat to American security in either of these cases that could justify risking American lives (p. 55-56). He states that the CNN Effect tends to be over exaggerated and raises questions as to whether “people [are] so unimaginative that they react only when they see pictures of an event” (Wittkopf, 1999, 55). Thus, while the CNN Effect may have had an effect on the First Gulf War, questions arise as to its impact on other events, specifically on conflicts and humanitarian crises in Africa.

Public opinion can be an influential factor on public policy. If the media successfully mobilizes the public, the public can put pressure on government representatives to change government policies. The media can also do the opposite. By framing an event in a negative manner or not reporting on the event at all, the public may not be mobilized at all. Mueller (1999) states that there are factors that can minimize the effects of the media on public opinion or, in some cases, reverse the equation to where the public affects what the media reports. In relation to US foreign policy, he states, “in this new world dominated by unthreatened wealth seekers, public opinion will play its role in U.S. foreign policy, and as always it will be an important one” (Wittkopf, 1999, 51).
Media Ownership

Although the public has expected the media to act as an unbiased watchdog, looking out for the country’s interests, some academics warn of the media’s true nature. Although the media is out to inform the public on events like conflict situations, in the end, they are also businesses. In particular, academics have noticed the profound effect the media industry’s owners and those invested in the media realm have on what is reported and how that reporting is done. Goodall et al (1994) state that “the political-economic approach assumes that the material aspects of production in the media industries affect the content (conceived as ideology) to such an extent that everything that occurs in the media is shaped by these material aspects to fit with the interest of media’s owners and controllers” (Jakubowicz, 1994, 17). Herman and Chomsky (1988) have continued this argument, stating that “media content, particularly news and current affairs, is heavily influenced by which corporations own and control the media and what other interests they might have… According to them, the key filters on news are the size and scope of media ownership, the power of advertisers, and the sourcing and choice of news” (in Jakubowicz, 1994, 17-18). Thus, if the business side of the media does not find a story to be ‘sellable’, that story will either receive relatively little attention, no attention, or will be portrayed negatively in order to keep investors happy.

Mueller (1999) ties the question of media ownership to the media’s effect on public opinion:

The public’s attitudes on foreign affairs are set much more by the objective content of the issue and by the position of major policymakers than by the media. The media are not so much agenda setters as purveyors and entrepreneurs of tantalizing information and, like any other entrepreneur, they are susceptible to
market forces. If they give an issue big play, it may arrest attention for a while, but this is no guarantee the issue will “take”. As with any business enterprise, media moguls follow up on those proffered items that stimulate their customers’ interests. In that very important sense, the media does not set the agenda, the public does (Wittkopf, 1999, 55).

Media Framing and Humanitarian Crises

Atrocities committed during humanitarian crises are nothing new. Throughout history, we find many instances where entire peoples have been wiped out as empires have spread. However, we are now able to hear about humanitarian crises within hours, if not minutes, of them occurring (Allen & Seaton, 1999, 49). This ‘immediate news’ style of reporting has led to major problems since reporters are expected to beat other news stations in reporting on the same story. In this mad race to get the story back to the news room, the complex nature of the conflicts is pushed aside (Allen & Seaton, 1999, 54).

Studies have shown that there are two main themes in reporting crises: (1) a focus on what is known as the “Post-Cold War Disorder” and (2) a focus on the victims. Within these two themes, four framing styles emerge: empathy framing, distance framing, support framing, and critical framing. Understanding the varieties of media framing is important because, as Robinson (2002) states,

News media reports do not ‘objectively’ reflect humanitarian crises. Rather, they report crises in particular and often very different ways…Accordingly, we can theorize that news media influence is greatest when coverage is framed so as to criticize government policy and empathize with the plight of suffering people. Conversely, when coverage is framed so as to produce an emotional distance from the plight of suffering people, the likely political effects will be to deter politicians from intervening (p. 25).
The “Post-Cold War Disorder” theme tends to concentrate on primordial claims in ethnic conflict, the ‘ancient ethnic hatreds’. This frame tends to propagate the idea that during the Cold War especially in communist countries, ethnicity was suppressed (sometimes violently). After the Cold War ended, ethnic conflict exploded throughout the 1990s since no one was there to stop it (Robinson, 2002, 29). In this frame, reporters use the ‘ancient ethnic hatreds’ theme as an interpretive framework, ignoring the deeper political conflicts that defined cases such as Bosnia and Rwanda (Robinson, 2002, 28). On the other hand, media framing of disasters and humanitarian crises that focuses on the victims of the crisis and their suffering also tends to ignore the deeper political and social causes, instead using a “discourse of simple humanitarianism which focuses on the requirements of aid agencies and short-term relief” (Robinson, 2002, 29). However, as stated by Wall (1997), “The Cold War framework has been removed with the end of the East-West rivalry, and now the coverage seems to suggest that violence is simply tribal or inexplicable” (p. 132).

The four types of media framing (distance, empathy, support, and critical) can affect how the above two themes are understood by the audience. Distance framing tends to put a wall between the audience and victims, creating a distance and thus a lack of empathy on the part of the audience. Empathy framing, on the other hand, brings the audience and the victims closer together, where the audience can identify or associate with the victims. Support framing tends to focus on government policy or the government inaction and policies of non-intervention in humanitarian crises. Critical framing, as such, criticizes government inaction in said crises (Robinson, 2002, 28-29).
The way the media frames a humanitarian crisis, then, can theoretically determine public opinion and changes in public policy. There are, however, some flaws with this. First, the question arises as to just how much power the media actually has to cause governments to intervene (Robinson, 2002, 11). Even if the media stresses the need for humanitarian intervention in conflicts where victims are suffering, it does not mean that any action will be taken by the government, no matter how loud the public outcry is.

Media Framing on Humanitarian Crises in Africa

Even when the news organization decides to “cover rapidly breaking, dramatic events” (Rosenblum, 1979), the type of news that is published about Africa in the American press is influenced by the general values and organizational demands of American media. News is not merely the random reporting of events, but rather is constructed and shaped by reporters and editors who determine what is worthy of coverage and what is not, and how events will be presented (White, 1950; Tuchman, 1978; Gitlin 1980; Chang and Lee 1992). Because the media tends to value conflict and crisis, especially when the news is coming from foreign countries, that is the type of story that most often gets reported (Lent, 1977; Hachten, 1992; Fair, 1993).

However, as stated by Ebo (1992), “News from Africa is not seen as a money-maker for news organizations which means only a handful of reporters cover the continent. Most are compelled to ‘look for news stories that are easy and convenient to gather’” (p. 17). Rosenblum (1979) states that news organizations tend to ‘parachute’ their reporters in to get the quick story and then pluck them back out once a newer and better story comes along.
This directly impacts how the media frames conflicts for their viewers. As stated by Seaton (1999), “Media provides the first, influential, definition of the social groups taking part in the conflict. Individuals within the groups may be portrayed alternatively as culpable or innocent of war-mongery, or even as hapless victims, but it is nevertheless as if all of them bear the marks of their history and identity. Then the media act in their traditional role as messengers” (Allen & Seaton, 1999 44). The media’s reporting today, at least in the case of Africa, tends to reinforce (rather than introduce) the age-old framing that conflicts on the continent are due to ethnicity. Brubaker (1974) states that, “When ethnic framing is successful, we may ‘see’ conflict and violence not only in ethnic, but in groupist terms… Such acts of framing and narrative encoding do not simply interpret the violence; they constitute it as ethnic…Although such imputed groupness is the product of prevailing interpretive frames, not necessarily a measure of the groupness felt and experienced by the participants in an event” (p. 173-174). Reducing complex conflicts from political, economic, or social conflicts and turning them into ‘ethnic issues’ ignores the roots of the conflict, thus prolonging and turning the conflict into something that is perceived to be something that cannot be dealt with through normal, ‘civilized’ means (Allen & Seaton, 1999).

A Comparative Perspective: Bosnia and Rwanda

The two most popular cases that have been studied in this way in recent decades are the Bosnian and Rwandan crises which occurred in 1993 and 1994. In the Bosnian case, many studies have shown that the media had a very strong impact on elites and these elites in turn put pressure on the Clinton administration to take a more active role in
the conflict (Auerbach & Bloch-Elkon, 2005, Wilhelm, 1999). On the other hand, studies have shown that, no matter the amount of suffering portrayed in the news, Rwanda did not receive that same attention. This was partly due to a strong policy derived from the Somalia conflict such that the presidency decided to restrict US intervention in African conflicts. Distance framing in Rwanda helped inhibit any impact the coverage may have had. Numerous studies since the genocide have shown that, “In the years since the genocide, the shortage of accurate media coverage has been placed high on the list of reasons for Western inaction…One international report concluded that the Western media’s failure to adequately report that genocide was taking place, and thereby generate public pressure for something to be done to stop it, had contributed to international indifference and inaction, and possibly to the crime itself” (Melvern, 2001, 103). Presenting the killing as a breakdown in a ceasefire made during the prolonged civil war or as part of a regular round of bloodletting, led viewers and politicians to feel little need to become involved in a country that had no strategic value to the West (Robinson, 2002, 114). “There is no doubt that the events in Rwanda in April 1994 took the British and the American media by surprise, but the message that the violence in Rwanda was the result of ancient tribal hatreds are simply quite wrong… there was chaos and anarchy” (Melvern, 2001, 91). The most common framing for Rwanda and most reports on Africa frame the continent as “a timeless and placeless realm of ‘tribal’ conflict” (Myers et al, 1995). Wall (1997) sums up the case for the media’s framing of African conflicts very well:

Because Africa is one of the continents about which many Americans know little, news coverage about it takes on a special importance. In many cases, it represents
the only information about that area that many Americans ever encounter. Instead of supplying readers with full, explanatory portraits of Africa, news organizations have tended to stick with the easy stereotype, the image that can be easily absorbed by readers, however false it may be. The coverage of the Rwanda crisis proves no exception to the negative, shallow coverage of the past. Granted, events such as this conflict are complicated and violent, yet using metaphors to try to bring colorful reports is a disservice not only to Africans but also to American news consumers. The tendency seen here to write off Rwanda (and perhaps all of Africa) as naturally violent and not worth analyzing on any insightful level makes American news coverage one more terrible element in the entire crisis... By relying on tribalism as the explanation for the violence, the magazines rarely mentioned who planned and executed the genocide that started the violence. Readers are left to believe that this tribal violence just exploded. By attributing the violence to tribal strife and not the known individuals who were truly responsible, the coverage lets the real perpetrators off the hook (p. 132).

Questions arose after the Bosnian conflict and the Rwandan genocide as to why these two events received such different responses from the international community. Melvern (2001) wrote that NGOs and other humanitarian groups tried to get the attention of Western politicians so that they would take action in Rwanda. NGOs like Oxfam and Amnesty International were two of the main organizations pushing for the United Nations to do something about Rwanda during those first weeks of the genocide, writing that “what was happening was a plot by an extremist clique to cling to power. This clique was using ethnicity to achieve its aims” (p. 95). In letters to the media and to politicians, Melvern (2001) states that heads of non-governmental organizations like William F. Schulz, the executive director of Amnesty International, contacted media sources like the Washington Post, stating that:

the UN should find a means to protect the innocent. To describe ancient ethnic hatreds in Rwanda was deplorable, faulty, and dangerous. Another letter asked: “One has to wonder why the atrocities in Bosnia receive the widespread attention they do while the massacres of tens of thousands in an African country is met with a collective denial of responsibility and a hasty retreat’ (p. 95).
Melissa Wall (1997) analyzed 38 full-length news reports about the Rwanda crisis from Newsweek, Time, and US News and World Report. She found that aid workers who were working on the ground in Rwanda at the time were the most interviewed and quoted (22%) followed by local people and that expert sources such as human rights specialists, heads of NGOs, or academic specialists made up only 5% of the sources (p. 264). 74 percent of the portrayals of Rwandans depicted them as passive actors in the conflict, 10 percent described them as causing the violence, 9 percent as neutral and 7 percent as helping to solve problems (p. 264). The conflict was mainly attributed to tribalism, either as a direct or indirect cause, and ethnicity was generally indirectly referenced through group identification.

Wall found five general themes that appeared in the reporting on the crisis: “(1) the Rwanda violence was the result of irrational tribalism; (2) Rwandan people are little better than animals, ranging from the barbaric to the helpless and pathetic; (3) the violence is incomprehensible, and thus is explained through comparison to Biblical myths, supernatural causes, natural disasters, or diseases; (4) neighboring African countries are just as violent and thus unable to help solve Rwanda’s problems; (5) only the West is capable of solving Rwanda’s problems” (p. 121). The media generally tended to avoid explaining other causes of the conflict beyond the ‘ethnic’ aspect, suggesting that Rwandans were “fated to kill each other” (p. 266). The violence was described in terms of being an ‘explosion’, implying that it was innate in all Rwandan people, who were generally framed as being barbaric animals who were either a part of the violence or victims of the violence, and that they would “burst into savage slaughter at any time”
even though the frames portrayed most of them as passive witnesses to the violence (p. 266). Throughout the crisis, neighboring countries were brushed off in relation to being able to help solve the crisis. Instead, the media concentrated on what Western nations and large international organizations and NGOs were doing to help, implying that only the West could really help solve this problem (p. 269).

Overall, Wall summed up her argument as follows:

By relying on tribalism as the explanation for the violence, the magazines rarely mentioned who planned and executed the genocide that started the violence. Readers are left to believe that this tribal violence just exploded. By attributing the violence to tribal strife and not the known individuals who were truly responsible, the coverage lets the real perpetrators off the hook (p. 132).

Wall’s study shows that, in this horrific case, the media did a disservice to the Rwandan people and should be held accountable for their reporting. By framing the crisis as something that is ‘innate’ and primordial, as something that is a part of nature, the media presented the situation as something that could not be stopped. As such, those who were responsible for planning the genocide were able to run amuck in the country, murdering almost one million people with no one taking any action whatsoever. Studies like this one show not only the power that the media has in mobilizing the public, but how the media portrays Africa.

2.2 Theories of Ethnic Identity

There have been numerous attempts to explain how ethnicity comes about and why ethnicity leads to some of the most vicious acts of violence and conflict. While there are many theories, two primary schools of thought have emerged in this field: Primordialism and instrumentalism. Within the instrumentalist school emerged social
constructivism, which has also gained a following in academia. A common idea that appears in all ethnic conflicts, and a key feature in the instrumentalist and constructivist theories, is the role of elite group leaders and their ability to manipulate and/or construct ethnicity in order to “foster discrimination and mobilize group members against their foes” (Sisk, 1996, 13).

Primordialism

Primordialism refers to the idea that ethnicity and identity are a cultural given within communities and that they are biological, natural, irrational, and immune to political calculations (Sisk, 1996; Smith, 2000; Horowitz, 2001; Wimmer, 2002; Lake & Rothchild, 1998). This form of collective identity stands apart from things such as “rational choice and the pursuit of material interests that characterize much of our lives” (Smith, 2000, 5). Collective identity becomes a basic factor in cultures and remains as such without being diminished by space or time and cannot be altered by individuals or groups within the community (Wimmer, 2002, 46; Lake & Rothchild, 1998, 5). Such identities are passed down from one generation to another through language, struggles for survival, shared memories and customs, religion, myths of origin, race, and attachments to homelands and territories, creating a community whose ties exist outside of the restrictions of time (Sisk, 1996, 12; Smith, 2000, 21). “Traditionality, the persistence of the past into the present, and a sense of collective self-interest” is thus the base for all groups and communities (Horowitz, 2001, 51). The ties that exist within these communities can only exist due to the perception, cognition, and belief of its individual
members and that it is they who “assume that these cultural features are given, who attribute overwhelming importance to those ties, who feel an overpowering sense of coerciveness, and…possess a power beyond rational calculation and interest—because people attribute that power and meaning to them, not because of the nature of the primordial tie itself” (Smith, 2000, 21). Smith (1986), one of the leading scholars in this school of thought, states that these factors “precede more complex political formations and provide the bases upon which the latter can be built” (p. 12).

Primordialism, however, is heavily criticized in that it fails to take into account how conflicts based on identity vary in time and place, or, as Lake & Rothchild (1998) state “the approach founders on its inability to explain the emergence of new and transformed identities or account for the long periods in which either ethnicity is not a salient political characteristic or relations between different ethnic groups are comparatively peaceful” (p. 5).

Instrumentalism/Constructivism

Instrumentalism centers on the role of elites and political entrepreneurs who manipulate ethnic, religious, regional and cultural differences to ensure the monopolization of power and resources (Sisk, 1996; Wimmer, 2002; Lake & Rothchild, 1998; Smith, 2000). Unlike primordialism, ethnicity within the instrumentalist school of thought does not exist outside of space and time. Rather, it is “contextual, fluid, and a function of structural conditions in society, ethnic identities wax and wane, contingent on a wide variety of variables” (Sisk, 1996, 12). These variables include the “capacity and skills of political entrepreneurs who can effectively mobilize groups for collective aims
and articulate beliefs about common ancestry and destiny” (Sisk, 1996, 12). As Wimmer (2002) states, “ethnic politics serves to mobilize socio-economic interest groups…[and] identity is considered relevant only to the extent that it lends itself to being put to such political use… as politically meaningful when mobilization along ethnic or national lines entails a strategic advantage over other possible political networks” (p. 45). Collective identity thus becomes “less a matter of incompatible identities and more a consequence of (1) competition over economic and environmental resources in situations where relations among groups vary according to wealth and social status; and (2) differential rates and patterns of modernization between groups” (Sisk, 1996, 12). Thus, collective identity and ethnic conflict is generally argued to be a result of both elite manipulation of imagined identities and the struggles within competitive economic systems (such as globalization and the free market system) between both individuals and groups.

Ethnicity becomes a tool for the elites and other leaders who make the claim that ethnicity and cultural goals are necessary to preserve and promote the community (Smith, 1986, 9). Mass support is generated in the elites’ struggle to attain wealth, power, and prestige “and that, given a world of scarce resources but high levels of communication, ethnic symbols and boundaries are able to evoke greater commitment and easier modes of coordination of different sectional interests under a single banner” (Smith, 1986, 9). Lake & Rothchild (1998) sum up the instrumentalist theory very well, stating that:

Instrumentalism understands ethnicity as a tool used by individuals, groups, or elites to obtain some larger, typically material end. In this view, ethnicity has little independent standing outside the political process in which collective ends are sought. Whether used defensively to thwart the ambition of others or offensively to achieve an end of one’s own, ethnicity is primarily a label or set of symbolic ties that is used for political advantages—much like interest-group membership or
political-party affiliation. Given the existing structure of states, and the geographic concentration of individuals with common social or economic backgrounds within these entities, ethnicity may be a powerful and frequently used political tool, but according to instrumentalists this does not distinguish ethnicity fundamentally from other political affiliates (p. 6).

However, there are criticisms concerning just how much power elites have over ethnicity and collective identity. Lake & Rothchild (1998) state that “critics of instrumentalism counter that ethnicity is not something that can be decided upon by individuals at will, like other political affiliations, but is embedded within and controlled by the larger society [and] they point to the inherently social nature of all ethnic identities and argue, in contrast, that ethnicity can only be understood within a “relational framework”” (p. 6).

Constructivism argues that identity and, in turn, nationalism, is not fixed but rather contingent and changing. Nationalism creates and continues to create the nation rather than the opposite and thus, nations and nationalism are amenable to being constructed or eroded through political institutions, symbols, narratives, and discourses over time (Smith, 2000, 52). Collective identities are constructed by elites over time, eventually taking on a life of their own, until differences between groups become a platform that deepens the type of conflicts that we see in Africa. As Smith (2000) states, “Novel in this view…[are] the elements of cultural representation and social engineering and the importance of deliberate elite innovation that this implies…[nations] are the product of “cultural work” on the part of elites; without such elite narratives, the nation is unimaginable and incommunicable” (p. 53). The nation and its traditions are thus a deliberate and invariant creation made by elites, constructed and “fabricated by cultural
engineers who design symbols, mythologies, rituals, and histories specifically to meet modern mass needs” (Smith, 2000, 53). Horowitz (2001) presents constructivism almost as an act that elites put on in a play, stating that, “in the process of boundary enlargement or contraction, cultural and political elites play their part, just as social constructivists claim, emphasizing those features in the situation of their audience, including those affinities and disparities that conduce to one or another definition of the group and its boundaries” (p. 51).

Theories of Ethnic Conflict

Ethnic conflict, much like ethnicity, is also understood in terms of the previously mentioned theories, being explained by scholars as “either primordial and innate or instrumental and at least partially socially constructed” (Sisk, 1996, viii). For example, primordialists believe that the sense of community identity that emerges from age-old traditions “necessarily generates awareness of other communities to be ultimately rooted in ethnicity itself” since ethnicity tends to override other features of the community (Horowitz, 2001, 51). However, there are numerous criticisms of primordialism’s understanding of ethnic conflict. Lake & Rothchild (1998) summarize this criticism extremely well, stating that “although recognizing that ethnic warfare is not a constant state of affairs, primordialists see conflict as flowing from ethnic differences and, therefore, not necessarily in need of explanation [and] although analysts might probe the catalysts in any given outbreak of violence, conflict is understood to be ultimately rooted in ethnicity itself” (p. 5). They go further, stating that, since ethnicity tends to trump all other aspects of identity, the social, political, or economic factors of a conflict can be
minimized in importance or ignored completely in favor of community identity (Lake & Rothchild, 1998, 5).

In the case of instrumentalism, politicized ethnicity does not truly differ from other forms of political association. The ‘lessons’ that come from understanding ethnic conflict can be applied to other sorts of conflicts and not necessarily restricted to those of community identity. Lake & Rothchild (1998) state that “if politicized ethnicity is not inherently different from other forms of political association, ethnic conflict should not necessarily, be different from other conflicts based on interest or ideology. In this view, ethnic conflict is part of the larger conflict process” (p. 6).

Constructivists do not view ethnicity as being inherently conflictual. Rather, conflict arises from social systems that individuals have no control over. “It is the social system that breeds violent conflict, not individuals, and it is the socially constructed nature of ethnicity that can cause conflicts, once begun, to spin out of control” (Lake & Rothchild, 1998, 6). Lake & Rothchild (1998) analyzed how cleavages within societies came about and how these cleavages were similar or different in terms of the ‘source’ of the conflict. They found that “constructivist accounts of ethnic conflict are generalizable, but only to other conflicts that are also based largely on socially constructed groups and cleavages… Because of the generalizability of our principal findings, and the often amorphous but always permeable borders between ethnic, clan, religious, regionalist, and nationalist groups…we believe ethnic conflict is part of a broader set of social relationships and that nearly all of our conclusions pertain equally well to other conflicts in this category” (p. 7). Thus, while constructivism is currently considered to be the most
‘acceptable’ of the theory of conflict, it is difficult to identify the true role of ethnicity in a conflict in comparison to other social relationships. It is important to note, however, ethnicity is not viewed as being something isolated from religion, nationalism, or other aspects of community identities.

While theories can provide scholars a starting point for understanding conflict, creating all-encompassing theories that generalize across all cases of conflict, ethnic or otherwise (such as the ones mentioned previously), can be hazardous as it can ignore the “unique historical [and social] development, structural conditions, and regional and international contexts” that influence conflict (Sisk, 1996, 13; Horowitz, 2001, 53). Sisk (1996) recommends that ethnic conflict should be viewed as part of a spectrum. He states that analysts are beginning to agree that primordialism and instrumentalism/constructivism are not mutually exclusive and “can in fact be describing different sides of the same coin” (p. 13).

Horowitz (2001) provides an alternate explanation as to why ethnic conflict emerges. Rather than conflict being caused simply by the presence of ethnicity, he argues that it is the discriminatory practices and group bias against other ethnic groups. This can be due to competition for resources and “rewards” and the sometimes violent disputes over political power in ethnically divided societies are a direct result of this competition (p. 52). Thus, “a hard emphasis on the responsiveness of ethnic groups to the deep needs of group members is not at odds with a keen sense of the variability of ethnic phenomena…group members may entertain sentiments so intense that observers identify them as primordial, even though group identities are socially constructed, recently
constructed, founded on relatively little in the way of palpable differences, and mutable as environmental conditions change” (Horowitz, 2001, 51).
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Framing analysis and document analysis were used in this study. Articles from four major Western resources (CNN International, BBC, MSNBC, and FOX News) were chosen due to the large number of viewers/readers as well as their large internet and/or television presence. BBC and CNN were chosen as they reach a larger international community and MSNBC and FOX News were chosen as they are directed more to the US population (Journalism.org, 2009).2

3.1 Sources

- **BBC News** ([www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk))

  All of the BBC stories are bylined, normally stating the reporters’ name as well as what branch of the BBC they represent. All of the news content and reporting come directly from the BBC. Little information is taken from wire service supplements like Associated Press and Reuters. When information is taken from these services, the BBC directly states that they are the source of the information. In most cases related to this study, the articles were written by reporters who were located at the Nairobi office of the BBC (Journalism.org, 2009). The BBC, unlike other news sources, does not place links inside the articles to original documents or outside websites. Rather, they offer links to other news articles they have written on the event to provide more information. This is important as far as this study goes because, when the articles

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were found lacking in key information for the viewer to understanding the full impact of the Kenyan crisis, this information was found in the linked articles (Journalism.org, 2009).

- **CNN** ([www.cnn.com](http://www.cnn.com))

  CNN averages about 24 million unique viewers a month and comes second to MSNBC in terms of internet traffic. CNN has a working relationship with Yahoo, leading it to be one of the most disseminated news sources. CNN is mostly concerned with continuous updates rather than providing in-depth information on stories. As stated by this study, “The CNN name is important on the site, but as with depth, takes second seat to timeliness” (Journalism.org, 2009). The majority of the headlines are wire stories. The few that do come from CNN staff generally do not carry bylines, although there are some exceptions to this. The stories that CNN provides tend to come from the Associated Press (Journalism.org, 2009).

- **Fox News** ([www.foxnews.com](http://www.foxnews.com))

  Fox News, while big on cable television, tends to lag behind CNN and MSNBC online. Although FOX has bypassed the other two cable news channels to become the top cable news channel on television, its website comes in third as far as number of viewers is concerned. Although the stories overall come from the Associated Press, the website “feeds off the identity and strength of the cable channel more than it embodies an identity for itself” (Journalism.org, 2009). Up-to-the-minute news is not given the same priority as on other cable news sites. The
website updates about every half hour with three or four headlines. The report stated that “there is little attempt to create coverage packages with multimedia reports or backgrounders from Fox News” (Journalism.org).

- **MSNBC & NBC News** ([www.msnbc.com](http://www.msnbc.com))

  Although MSNBC has not had such a strong presence on cable television, the website has been one of the top news sites on the internet, averaging 26 million unique visitors. MSNBC tends to get its news from a multitude of sources, which can become rather confusing. It gets news content from MSNBC, NBC, and Newsweek (all a part of the MSNBC family) as well as the Washington Post and other wire services. The majority of the news tends to come from Associated Press (Journalism.org, 2009).

  MSNBC tends to report the ‘top stories of the hour’ in its main section on the webpage. None of the stories examined ever contained links to outside Web sites, only to other stories on the website. These links, unlike the BBC, did not lead to stories that provided more information. Rather, they were previous ‘up-to-the-minute’ headlines that were meant to explain what had happened so far (Journalism.org, 2009).

### 3.2 Collecting the Articles

Due to the unique nature of each media sources’ website, a uniform method of collecting the news articles was not possible. The methods for collecting the articles are discussed in relation to each source.
BBC

The BBC articles were collected from their website, www.bbc.com. The word ‘Kenya’ was typed into the search engine and the articles were then narrowed down by selecting the ‘News and Sports’ category as these types of articles were more relevant to this study. The articles found in the search were then sorted by date and all of the articles dating from December 27, 2007 to January 4, 2008 were collected. The articles were selected based on relevance. Specifically, they were chosen if they were written about the Kenyan political crisis. Other stories that mentioned the crisis, such as stories about Kenyan Olympic runners and Obama’s relatives talking briefly about the crisis were not used. A total of 59 articles were found that met these requirements during the first period; however, due to the large number of articles, eleven articles were chosen that best exemplified the BBC’s reporting on this event.

CNN

The CNN articles were collected from the CNN website, www.cnn.com. The word ‘Kenya’ was once again used in the search engine and the articles were then narrowed down by selecting the option to look only at CNN News. The articles were then sorted by date and all of the articles that fell between 12/27/2007 and 1/4/2009 were selected. Only ten articles were analyzed (without choice as to which articles) due to CNN removing a large number of articles from their archive relating to this topic.
FOXNEWS

The FOX News articles were taken from their website, www.foxnews.com. The word ‘Kenya’ was once again typed into the search engine. When the search was brought up, the selection for raw articles was chosen as this brought up all of the articles FOX News had produced on Kenya. Only ten articles were found that fit within the first time period and had relevance to the topic.

MSNBC

The MSNBC articles were taken from their website, www.msnbc.com. Unlike the other websites, two separate searchers had to be conducted to find relevant articles: one for ‘Kenya election’ and one for ‘Kenya violence’. This was due to the websites inability to sort by date or relevance, thus finding reports that would relate to other countries with no relevance to the conflict being researched. The first one hundred pages had to be searched through for both keyword searches to find any article that had relevance to the Kenyan political crisis. Only six articles were found which fit into the time period and were relevant.

3.3 Analyzing the Articles

Basic Article Information

Basic information was pulled from each of the articles, which included the date the article was published/updated, the title of the article, the reporter (if listed), the source of the information (if available), and the length of the article. Afterwards, a content
analysis was conducted. The content analysis looked at the people who were interviewed and quoted; the various descriptions used to identify perpetrators, victims, the violence, and the framing of the violence; and the locations listed in the article.

People Quoted

There were two methods used to identify people who were quoted in the articles. The first method was done by finding direct quotes and then identifying who made the quote and what group (if any) they were affiliated with. The second method consisted of quotes in which the reporter identified speaking with a person or a representative of a group/organization but did not take any direct quotes from that person or organization. The person was then identified (using the title ‘unnamed’ if a specific person was not identified) and identified what group or organization they were a member of (if any).

Perpetrators

The description of the perpetrators came from the ways the reporters or those they quoted identified those committing the violence such as ‘protestors’, ‘police’, ‘young men’, and ‘ethnic gangs’. This tended to have to be taken in context since, in some cases, the terms for the people used in ‘perpetrators’ category were also victims. Specifically, protestors were listed both as perpetrators of the violence (setting buildings and cars on fire as well as causing general disruption in the city) but were also listed as victims (when they were attacked by the police).
Victims

The description of the victims came from the ways the reporters or those they quoted identified those who were targeted by the perpetrators such as ‘Kenyans’, ‘protestors’, ‘policemen’, and ‘ethnic Kikuyus’. In many cases, the victims were not identified. In these cases, they were categorized as being ‘unspecified’ with no ties to any of the categories created later on in the research. This does not mean that they did not represent these categories, only that the news article did not specify their ties.

Locations

Locations were identified in two manners. The first was the actual naming of a location such as Kisumu or Nairobi. In some cases, however, alternate names were used such as ‘Nairobi’s slums’ in replacement for Kibera and Mathare or ‘Kenya’s coastal city’ for Mombasa. These were all noted in the content analysis.

Description of the Violence

The first method of identifying the way the reporter talked about the violence during this period consisted of taking note of specific acts of violence mentioned such as ‘setting fires’, ‘hacked to death with machetes/pangas’, ‘looting’, ‘stoning’, and ‘destroying billboards’. These were then separated into different categories such as ‘arson’, ‘looting’, ‘murder’, etc.
Framing the Violence

The second method of identifying the way the reporter talked about the violence during this period consisted of finding the ways the reporter or those that the reporter quoted described the violence. These descriptions range from poetic descriptions (‘bloodshed’, ‘national disaster’, ‘rampage’) to descriptions identifying the context of the violence (‘ethnic clash’, ‘protests’, ‘police-shoot-to-kill’, ‘genocide’, ‘ethnic cleansing’).

3.4 Interpreting Frames

The last step consisted of interpreting how the media framed the conflict. This was done in two manners. First, themes were pulled from the actual data from the content analysis which was conducted in the first part of the overall analysis. Second, themes were pulled from an overall reading of the articles. This was dependent on how the researcher interpreted the articles.
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

4.1. Perpetrators

MSNBC

Throughout the first week of reporting, MSNBC discussed the clashes that occurred between police officers and perpetrators with political ties. These groups mainly include protestors, demonstrators, and those identified as Raila Odinga’s supporters. This relationship made an appearance in all of the articles from this time period and normally appeared multiple times in each article. In total, police officers were identified eight separate times as committing some sort of violence towards the protestors and demonstrators, usually in the form of tear gas and water cannons. On the other hand, the civilian half of this relationship was identified more often (N=10). When discussing this relationship as a whole, the police counted for 16% of the identifiers and political supporters counted for 20% and, when combined together, account for 36% of all perpetrator identifiers in the MSNBC articles (See Figure 2).

MSNBC tended to lean more towards describing the perpetrators of the violence in social terms. Overall, 39% of the perpetrators were discussed as having a lack of purpose beyond creating general chaos unlike those who fell into the other three categories. These groups were not discussed as having obvious ties to either party official or to certain ethnic groups. Those causing the chaos were generally regarded as looters, rioters, rival groups of men, etc. with no explanation as to why they were rioting. While these social categorizations were employed during the entirety of the first time period, the social framing was most prominent during the first few days of the conflict followed
closely by political identifiers. This categorization was used on twenty separate occasions, with the most common identification as being ‘rioters’ (N=5).

Before January 1, there was some mention of the division of Kenyan politics along ethnic lines. Ethnic perpetrators appeared in the articles on three separate occasions before the New Year. However, this discussion was done in relation to how certain ethnic groups generally supported one political candidate over another. The ethnic groups were described as thugs attempting to push for a recount of the votes. This changed on January 1, 2008. In reports of the burning of the church in Eldoret, the perpetrators suddenly changed from being those upset by the fraudulent nature of the election to ethnic gangs hunting down members of other ethnic groups (i.e. Kikuyu) in a scene reminiscent of the Rwandan genocide. Although MSNBC still used vocabulary that would seem to fall under a social categorization (ex. ‘vigilantes’, ‘youth’, ‘rival groups’, ‘unemployed, uneducated men’), the overall tone of the articles shifted what first appeared to be a social problem and turned the violence into an ethnic conflict. Interestingly, after January 1, the ethnic categorization of the perpetrators died down, going from nine identifications of ethnic perpetrators on January 1 to a single identification on January 3. In total, MSNBC identified perpetrators as having ethnic motivations 25% of the time.

FOXNEWS

FOXNEWS overall tended to discuss the political and the social side of the violence during the first time period. Much like MSNBC, FOX discussed the relationship between the police and political supporters, mentioning the police ten times
and political supporters twenty times. From December 31 onwards the violence became more widespread and interruptive. While the police were generally described as ‘police’, there was one instance where the article made a distinction and identified them as ‘riot police’, implying that the police were meant to put down a social uprising. The political supporters were also identified in a variety of ways. There was the usual ‘protestors’ and ‘demonstrators’ that made an appearance with all of the media sources. However, FOX also mentioned the government and the opposition party (the ODM) as perpetrators of the violence. However, the reporter was not the one to identify these two parties as being perpetrators of the violence. The accusations were made by each political camp against the other, mainly accusing the other group of being responsible for the violence following the elections. The clashes between the police and political supporters were a central feature in the articles. Although there were some instances where the police were described as having to fight with rioters and looters, in most cases they were described as having to control protests and demonstrations. When combining the percentage of identifiers together, these descriptions accounted for 46% of the identifiers, with police counting 15% and political supporters counting for 31% of the identifiers.

Although the relationship between the police and political supporters was the focus of FOX’s reporting, the network generally tended to identify the perpetrators in social vocabulary. These identifications appeared on twenty separate occasions in the first week, ranging from ‘rioters’ and ‘looters’ to ‘gangs’ and ‘vigilantes’ and counted for 39% of the identifiers. Once again, these groups had no obvious ties to political or ethnic groups as far as the reporting goes.
Much like MSNBC, FOX did not generally frame the perpetrators in terms of ethnicity until January 1. Before the burning of the church, there were only two instances where the perpetrators were identified in terms of ethnicity: the first as ‘Luo tribe members’ and the second as ‘ethnic gangs’. These identifiers, however, were only used in passing as more attention was paid to social and, to a lesser extent, the political crisis occurring. Ethnicity was given more attention on January 1st and 2nd; however, much like before the first, the ethnic nature of the conflict did not receive as much attention as the political and social crisis and focused on the incident occurring in Eldoret. Ethnicity only counted for 15% of the identifiers. Overall, the FOX articles did not present the conflict as being ethnic in nature as far as the perpetrators were concerned.

CNN

CNN presents a rather unique case when it comes to discussion of the perpetrators and the discussion of the violence following the election as a whole. Before January 1st, CNN made almost no mention of the violence following the elections. There was only one instance before the New Year where the violence and a perpetrator were identified. In the article for December 29 titled “Kenya President Narrows Poll Gap” (CNN, 12/29), “roaming gangs armed with machetes and sticks” were said to be attacking the homes of their political opponents, thus making the single mention of violence as political in nature.

CNN’s reporting on the violence increased on January 1st. When looking at the information from January 1st and 2nd, the perpetrators are equally identified as political,
social, and ethnic with one instance of police retaliation being mentioned. It is not until January 3rd and 4th that CNN makes an attempt to discuss the violence.

Much like the reporting from the 1st and 2nd, it is extremely difficult to identify the framing of the violence in terms of perpetrators. CNN spent the majority of their reporting discussing the increasing violence between police officials and political opponents. Between January 2nd and January 4th, police violence is mentioned on ten separate occasions compared to seven references to political supporters and four identifiers in the social category. The police counted for 32% of the identifiers during this first week compared to the 29% for social identifiers, 26% for political supporters, and 13% for ethnic identifiers. The conflict between the police and political supporters accounts for 58% of the identifiers, thus framing the conflict as a political one as far as the perpetrators are concerned. The ethnic aspects of the conflict generally tended to take a backseat to the other aspects of the conflict. Overall, CNN tended to discuss the conflict in terms of a political and social uprising and police retaliation (87%).

BBC

BBC portrayed the clashes as mostly occurring between police officers and perpetrators with political ties in the majority of the articles analyzed. This relationship made an appearance in all of the articles and normally appeared multiple times in each article and was overall the most prominent portrayal of the perpetrators. In total, police officers were identified ten separate times (40%) as committing some sort of violence
towards the protestors and demonstrators, usually in the form of tear gas and water cannons.

Overall, BBC discussed the civilian perpetrators in relation to their political ties rather than in relation to any ethnic ties or in social terms. In general, the perpetrators were not identified as to which party they supported and were mostly identified as ‘protestors’ and ‘demonstrators’. However, due to the nature of the conflict, it can be surmised that this meant that these groups were mainly supporters of the ODM. Political identifiers accounted for 32% of all identifiers in the CNN articles. In three instances, the reporter did discuss an ethnic dimension in Kenyan politics; however, this was done to show how certain ethnic groups tended to support one candidate over another rather than as ethnic groups fighting one another.

Unlike the other media sources, BBC did not spend a lot of time discussing the perpetrators in social terms. The only appearance of a social crisis appeared when the reporter mentioned angry crowds, mobs, and looters. In all, these perpetrators were only identified 12% of the time, compared to the previously discussed police officers at 40% and the political supporters at 32%.

Although the ethnic nature of the conflict was not a prominent theme in the articles, BBC did mention this on January 1st and 2nd in the articles concerning the church burning in Eldoret. However, the network did not imply that ethnicity was the sole identifier of the perpetrators as is shown with data from the next two days where perpetrators were once again referred to in relation to their political ties. In all, ethnic identifiers were used for 16% of the identifiers, outnumbering the social identifiers.
Figure 1: Descriptions of Perpetrators in All Articles

Analysis

When comparing the four media sources, it is perhaps more pertinent to split them, with CNN and BBC on one side and MSNBC and FOX News on the other. This is because the latter two sources both use Associated Press as their source while BBC tends to rely more on their own reporters and CNN rely more on Reuters. When discussing the sources in this manner, it is easier to see the differences that appear in relation to the identifiers used when describing the perpetrators. CNN and BBC generally tended to discuss the political side of the conflict rather than the social aspect. In all, police officials accounted for 40% of all identifiers while political supporters were at 32%. Thus, these two sources generally framed the conflict as more political in nature, as far as those committing the violence are concerned. FOX and MSN, on the other hand, only
discussed police officials as perpetrators of the violence 15% of the time. Political perpetrators accounted for 31% of the identifiers, in comparison. The most common factor in MSN and FOX reporting, however, related to social identifiers. In total, MSN and FOX described the perpetrators in social terms 39% of the time.

No media overly used an ethnic framing. CNN and BBC used ethnic identifiers only 16% of the time while MSN and FOX used them 15% of the time. Thus, according to my analysis, the media did not frame the conflict as ethnic in nature. When looking at the numbers for all four news sources, social identifiers accounted for 33% of all perpetrators discussed, political supporters for 27%, police officials counted for 22%, and ethnic perpetrators for only 18%. Rather, the conflict (depending on the media source) tended to be framed as being between the police and political supporters or consisted of mobs, looters, and rioters creating havoc after the elections.

![Description of Perpetrators by Sources](image)

Figure 2: Description of Perpetrators by Source
4.2. Victims

BBC

BBC showed two trends when the data on the victims were analyzed. From December 27th until December 30th, the victims are described as being targeted due to some sort of affiliation to a political or ethnic group or were police officers. For example, BBC noted that a number of police officers were attacked on December 28th due to suspicions of ballot tampering. On December 27th and 30th, the victims were said to be attacked due to their political affiliations. On December 29th, the victims were targeted because of their ethnicity.

In general, police officials were said to have been attacked either due to ballot tampering or during clashes between the police and political supporters. These two categories account for 8% and 23% of the identifiers, respectively.

By December 31st, a shift occurred in reporting on the types of people targeted. Increasingly, the victims were described as civilians or as targeted due to their ethnicity. It is difficult to say whether the civilians had a specific party affiliation or were of a specific ethnic group. Forty-six percent of the identifiers during this time period were generally civilian in nature, giving no specific identifiers as to any reason or cause for the attack.

The issue of ethnicity in relation to victims tended to appear most often when discussing the victims who were burned in the church in Eldoret. From January 1st until January 4th, all of the articles made mention of this event although the articles on January
3rd and 4th made less mention of the victims’ ethnicity. The articles and later references to the church thus made the ethnicity of the victims count for 23% of the identifiers.

CNN

Due to the researcher’s inability to find articles for each day in the first time period, it is difficult to establish a pattern between December 27th and 31st in relation to victim identifiers. However, from the data that was retrievable, the victims were described as targeted for specific reasons. Much like the BBC articles, those targeted had either political ties, ethnic ties, or were believed to be guilty of tampering with the ballots. January 1st and 2nd generally showed the same trend. On the rare occasion that victims were mentioned, they were said to have ties to either an ethnic group or a political party.

It wasn’t until January 3rd that victims were seemingly targeted for no observable reason. CNN began to increase references to victims as the days went by. On January 4th, specific identifications for victims increased to ten. Over half of the victims were unidentified. Political victims were mentioned twice and ethnic victims were mentioned once. There was a single instance where the victims were mentioned in relation to their ethnic affiliation but were also identified as being targeted due to their political affiliation.

In total, police officials were identified as victims 6% of the time, political supporters 23%, victims identified by ethnicity 24%, and unidentified 47%.
FOX

Much like the other media sources, FOX identified most of the victims as being unidentified (56%) with no clear (or identified) ties to an ethnic or political group. For the month of December, many of the victims were reported to have been either police officers, members of an ethnic group (Kikuyu specifically), or supporters of the opposition party. Those who were mentioned during this time were not identified in any fashion besides the statement that they were unidentifiable.

In January, a greater variety of descriptions of the victims began to occur. All three references to ethnic victims were in reports on the thirty Kikuyu people who were killed in the church in Eldoret. With the exception of two references to protestors being attacked by the police and the police being attacked, all victim identifications for this period generally fell into the unidentified category. The most common targets tended to be women and children or unidentified victims.

Overall, 56% of the identifiers referred to unidentified Kenyans, 26% to ethnic groups, 9% to political supporters, and 9% to police officials.

MSNBC

MSN tended to be a bit vague when describing the victims during this period. In the beginning of the crisis, the network used descriptions that fit into all four categories and did not give preference to one type of description over another. Like the other media, MSN generally identified the victims in relation to their political or ethnic affiliation with only two instances where the victims were not identified by these categories. However, a
A noticeable shift occurred on January 1st. On the New Year, three out of the four descriptions identified the victims’ ethnic group due to the article being on the church burning in Eldoret. After January 1st, all of the victims with the exception of one (‘protestors’) fell into the unidentified category.

Overall, MSN tended to identify the victims as unidentified. However, those said to be targeted for ethnic reasons account for 33% of all identifiers, followed by political supporters at 13% and police officials at 7%.

Analysis

Overall, all four media sources identified half of the victims as unidentified Kenyans caught in the crossfire of the violence. Officials who were identified as victims of the violence accounted for about 7% of the total, ranging from 6% in the CNN articles to 9% in the FOX News articles.

The real differences appear in references to political supporters and victims who were said to be attacked due to their ethnicity. In total, 18% of the victims were identified as being targeted for their ethnic affiliations while 27% were said to be targeted for their political affiliation. CNN and BBC identified 24% and 23% of the victims as attacked due to their ethnicity, respectively, while 23% of victims were attacked for their political affiliation. FOX was not very far off with 26% of victims attacked for their ethnicity while 13% were attacked for their political affiliation. MSN, however, identified 33% of victims said to be attacked for their ethnicity and only 9% for their political affiliation.

Overall, in reference to the political and ethnic aspects of the conflict, CNN and BBC
addressed these rather equally in terms of victims. FOX and MSN, on the other hand, tended to portray this conflict as being more ethnic than political.

![Figure 3: Description of Victims by Source](image)

4.3. Describing the Violence

**BBC**

BBC had thirty-seven identifiers for descriptions of violence. The most common identifier was ‘killing’ (N=5) followed by ‘horrific killings’ (N=2). Most of the murders described by BBC involved shootings (‘shooting’, ‘man shot dead’, ‘death by gunfire’) although generally the nature of the violence was not specified. The second most common category was the ‘multiple’ category. The identifiers which fell into this category directly related to the violence committed at the church in Eldoret as people were killed within the burning church and, those who escaped the inferno were attacked
with machetes and other weapons. The third most common category was arson (seven times). BBC stated that a variety of objects were set on fire, ranging from cars to various buildings and businesses to homes. Other identifiers (assault, looting, police attacks, destruction of property, other) appeared a minimal number of times.

**CNN**

CNN had a total of thirty-nine identifiers for descriptions of violence. The majority of identifiers tended to fall into the ‘multiple’ category. This category accounted for two situations of violence. The first was the attack on the church in Eldoret, in which the descriptors concerned the people being burned to death and attacked with various weapons. The second instance was in relation to the riots and protests which were occurring at the same time. These identifiers were either general claims of violence being perpetrated (‘looting and burning’) or specified context of the violence (‘attacks on opposition members’).

The second most common category were identifiers describing police violence (N=8). In this situation, there tended to be three general descriptions: (1) police officers chasing civilians down streets; (2) police targeting people in the streets; and (3) police using various methods to control rioters and demonstrators (tear gas and water cannons). Murders were the third most common descriptors (N=7). The specific causes of death outnumbered the general descriptions, with deaths attributed to cuts from a *panga* (a type of machete) (N=3) and gunshot wounds (N=3).
MSN

MSN had a total of thirty-three identifiers for violence. The majority related to acts of arson (N=11). In nine instances the locations or items in relation to the arson were described (‘houses burnt’, ‘shops burnt’, ‘stores and houses burnt’, and ‘houses, churches, and buses burnt’). Looting and assault both occurred the same number of times (N=7). In relation to descriptions of assault, the most common descriptor were attacks using machetes or sticks (N=5). Police attacks were the fourth most common descriptions, occurring five times. These descriptors were generally in relation to police attempts at crowd control during the riots and demonstrations and involved police use of tear gas, water cannons, clubs, and live bullets. The other four categories (murder, destruction of property, multiple, other) appeared a minimal number of times.

FOX

FOX had forty-three descriptions of violence. The most common category was arson. This category consisted of general claims of fires being set (N=3) and descriptions of specific items being set on fire such as buses and buildings (N=9). The second most common category was ‘multiple’ (N=7). In the ‘multiple’ category, the descriptions of violence were related to the church burning in Eldoret. Murder and police attacks occurred the same number of times (N=6). Police attack descriptions involved crowd control measures (tear gas, water cannons, live bullets, beatings with batons) as well as descriptions of police shootings. Assault and looting occurred five times each. In the assault category, the descriptions ranged from rocks being thrown to people being
attacked with canes. The other two categories (destruction of property, other) occurred a minimal number of times.

Figure 4: Description of Violence by Category

Figure 5: Description of Violence by Category and Source
Analysis

In relation to the number of times the violence was described, all four sources generally had the same number of occurrences with FOX having the most at forty-three occurrences. In overall descriptions of violence, the most commonly discussed act of violence was arson, which occurred thirty-four times. The second most common was murder (N=26), generally shootings or attacks with machetes. Police attacks were the third most commonly discussed type of violence (N=23) and generally were in relation to crowd control measures. This was followed by those occurrences involving multiple descriptions of violence (N=22) and was mostly in relation to the church in Eldoret. The fifth most common description of the violence was assault, which mostly involved beatings, stoning, or attacks with machetes which did not result in death. Looting was the sixth most common description (N=15). The other two categories (destruction of property, other) occurred a minimal number of times.

When comparing the descriptions of violence between the sources, it is interesting to note that the data shows each source’s preference in their choice of descriptors. MSN and FOX, both supplied by Associated Press, described occurrences of assault, arson, and looting more often than BBC and CNN. CNN discussed police attacks and occurrences resulting in multiple uses of violence (generally in relation to the incident in Eldoret) more than the other three sources. BBC discussed instances of murder that were not in relation to the incident in Eldoret the most often.

MSN and FOX tended to show the same trend in reporting acts of violence. In the case of assaults, arson, looting, police attacks, and destruction of property, these two sources generally reported incidents the same number of times. Differences arose when it
came to descriptions of murder, multiple acts of violence, and incidents falling in the ‘other’ category. In these categories, MSN drastically outnumbered FOX in the number of reports made.

4.4. Framing the Violence

![Framing the Violence Chart]

Figure 6: Framing the Conflict

**BBC**

BBC generally framed the conflict as social in nature, accounting for 64% of the conflict frames. In the social conflict category, the terms that appeared most often were unrest (N=4), clashes (N=3), and trouble (N=2). However, BBC also used the terms ‘ethnic cleansing’, ‘ethnic violence’, and ‘genocide’ four times within a five day period with the most occurrences on January 1, 2008. The violence was rarely described as
political, with only 6% of the identifiers falling in this category. There was no mention whatsoever in the BBC articles of violence on the part of police officers.

**CNN**

CNN generally framed the conflict as social in nature, accounting for 58% of the conflict frames, followed by political frames (21%) and ethnic frames (19%). Although ‘post-election’ violence was the most common identifier (N=3), identifiers in the ethnic conflict category tended to appear more often (N=8). The terms ‘massacres’, ‘ethnic violence’, and ‘genocide’ each appeared twice, outnumbering other conflict framings with the exception of the previously mentioned ‘post-election violence’ and the term ‘clashes’ (N=2). On January 3rd, CNN described the violence both political and ethnic in nature. This did not occur in any of the other media sources.

**MSN**

MSN generally framed the conflict as social in nature, accounting for 72% of the conflict frames. The most common identifiers were ‘riots’ (five times), ‘chaos’ (three times), ‘unrest’ (two times), and ‘crisis’ (two times). The social conflict category as a whole had fourteen different identifiers. Ethnic framing came second with 15%. In this category, the most common identifiers were ‘genocide’, which appeared four times, and ‘ethnic violence’, which appeared twice. The ethnic conflict category was followed by political framing at 7% (N=4) and lastly by official violence at 6% (N=3). None of the identifiers in the last two categories appeared more than once.
FOX

FOX also generally framed the conflict as social in nature, accounting for 62% of the conflict frames. The general identifier ‘violence’ appeared a total of seventeen times. After this identifier, the most common identifiers in the social conflict categories were ‘riot’ (N=4), ‘chaos’ (N=3), ‘conflict’, ‘upheaval’, and ‘crisis’ (N=2). In all, there were seventeen different identifiers that fell into this category. Ethnic framing accounted for 13% of the descriptions, with the identifiers ‘genocide’ (N=3), ‘ethnic clashes’ (N=2), and ‘ethnic violence’ (N=2) appearing the most often. Political framing accounted for 19% of the framing with the two most common identifiers being ‘protest’ (N=4) and ‘demonstrations’ (N=3). Official violence only accounted for 6% of the frames (N=4).

Analysis

The social conflict frame far exceeds any other frame for all four sources. The data becomes interesting, however, when looking at the other three categories. For example, CNN framed the conflict as ethnic or political for a more or less equal amount although they leaned more towards the political frame than the ethnic frame.

MSN and FOX also framed the conflict as ethnic or political almost for an equal amount although they both tended to lean more towards the ethnic frame. However, FOX gives more emphasis to the political aspects of the conflict, with twelve different occurrences in which a political frame was used compared to MSN’s four occurrences.

Interestingly, BBC tended to frame the conflict as ethnic more often than any of the other sources, accounting for almost one third of their identifiers, while the political
frame only accounted for 6%. In all cases, mention of official violence was minimal or non-existent.

When looking simply at the figures, it would seem that CNN tends to be the least biased when presenting the Kenyan conflict. CNN presented the ethnic, political, and social aspects of the conflict equally as far as the content analysis is concerned. However, CNN made numerous comparison between Kenya and other ethnic conflicts in East Africa such as Rwanda and Somalia that evoked images of genocide and ethnic cleansing, skewing this ‘unbiased’ portrayal.

When the articles are looked at as a whole rather than as keywords, BBC appears to be the least biased and the most informed out of the four media outlets because they provided more information about the conflict and the specific historic and social context it was occurring in. Part of this could be credited to BBC not only having their own reporters but also hiring reporters from the regions that are being reported on and having headquarters in major regions (the BBC headquarters for East Africa is in Nairobi).

Identifying which source had a more ‘instrumental’ portrayal of the conflict is not possible to discern due to a lack of evidence of politicians or elites manipulating the conflict which was not released until the Human Rights Watch report at the end of January. MSN tended to have a more ‘primordial’ frame than the other three media outlets mainly due to the numerous comparisons to Rwanda as well as the numerous ethnic identifiers used for the perpetrators, victims, and the framing of the conflict. This is partly due to their ‘liberal’ reporting style that tends to be more sensationalist than
CNN or BBC. FOX mostly concentrated on the acts of violence the police committed against protestors and demonstrators than on the ‘ethnic’ aspect of the conflict.
CHAPTER 5: THEMATIC ANALYSIS

In this chapter, I treat the four media sources collectively in analyzing the themes used to frame the conflict. Five major themes appeared in all four media outlets: (1) Kenya was a model of democracy and economic success; (2) Kenya is a stabilizing force in a war-torn region; (3) Kenyans feared that democracy itself was under attack; (4) Kenya showed signs of becoming the next Rwanda; and (5) Kenya showed signs of becoming another failed African state.

5.1. Themes

Kenya Was a Model of Democracy and Economic Success

One of the most common themes was that Kenya had been a model for democracy and economic success in Africa. Almost forty separate quotes were pulled from the articles that explicitly stated this fact, oftentimes lamenting the fact that Kenya might not have been the ‘perfect’ model that had been hoped for.

During the first two days of the crisis, the articles tended to described the elections as “calm and orderly”, praised by international observers as being “generally smooth and fair” (MSN.com, 12/29/2007, BBC.com, 12/28/2007). Analysts interviewed stated that “the chance of a second transfer of power in two elections shows how Kenya’s democracy is thriving” (FOX.com, 12/28/2007). Kenyans themselves were quoted as having faith in the democratic system. One person was quoted by BBC, “I have not even milked my cow because today we are putting our country first” (BBC.com, 12/28/2007). Another Kenyan was quoted by CNN saying that he was “excited to vote because he feels
it’s the most important election in Kenya’s history since independence in 1964” while another report quoted a voter saying that “he was voting to encourage Kenyan youth to do the same” (CNN.com, 12/27/2007).

However, even this early in the election, some reports referenced concerns of vote rigging and how ‘fair’ the election would be. One mechanic was quoted by CNN as saying, “this time around, Kenyans are not the same. We are not the same. We cannot be tricked. We will put politicians to the test” (CNN.com, 12/27/2007). Reports noted that police urged people, whoever wins, should “not engage in unbridled celebrations that will cause resentment” (FOX.com, 12/28/2007). FOX quoted analysts who were concerned that this election, even in a thriving democracy, could have the “potential for trouble” (FOX.com, 12/28/2007).

All media sources also noted that Kenya was an economic success story, stating that “Kibaki, 76, has been credited with helping boost the East African nation’s economy with a growth that is among the highest in Africa and a booming tourism industry” (FOX.com, 12/28/2007). CNN reported that even those who were somewhat disappointed by Kibaki’s time in office stated that “while many Kenyans say they are tired of the (corruption) accusations and are hungry for change, many others credit Kibaki with keeping the country’s economy strong” (CNN.com, 12/28/2007).

Even at the height of the crisis, media reports still mentioned that Kenya was once a shining example of economic success and democracy. For example, on January 3rd, CNN wrote that “away from the tragic human costs, the unrest has also provoked concerns about the stability of the East African country’s economy, until now seen as a
model for the region” (CNN.com, 1/3/2007). FOX stated on December 31st that “the disputed campaign comes in one of the most developed countries in Africa, with a booming tourism industry and one of the continent’s highest growth rates” (FOX.com, 12/31/2007). MSN also followed this trend, but pointed out that even with such economic success, “many Kenyans are poor even though their country is one of the most developed in Africa” (MSN.com, 12/31/2007).

Kenya is a Stabilizing Force in a War-Torn Region

This theme was clearly articulated in the BBC and CNN articles. These media stated that Kenya was a strategic nation in East Africa. The BBC noted that “correspondents say the disorder is already starting to affect other parts of East Africa, to which Kenya is a gateway. As the most industrialized country in the region, many of Kenya’s neighbors depend on it for essential imports like cooking oil, salt, and flour” (BBC.com, 1/2/2008). CNN made this point more often in statements such as: “The election could be a test for Kenya’s young, multi-democracy. Kenya is East Africa’s biggest economy and a stable country, so a peaceful vote and a smooth transition of power were seen as crucial for an otherwise volatile region” (CNN.com, 12/27/2007; 12/28/2007; 12/29/2007).

MSN and FOX did not make such clear statements of this theme. Instead, they stressed that Kenya was a model for democracy for East Africa. They tended to imply that should this ‘successful’ democracy fail, it would set a bad example for other countries that the West was attempting to pressure into becoming democracies as well. This idea appeared in statements such as “The violence has killed at least 270 people in
what has been East Africa’s most stable and prosperous democracy” and “a bloody convulsion threatening what has been East Africa’s most stable and prosperous economy”, reminding readers in the West that saving Kenya is not simply for its own good, but for the good of the entire ‘war-torn’ region and the West (FOX.com, 1/1/2008; MSN.com, 12/31/2007).

These quotes evoked the memories of the West’s failure to take swift and decisive action in Rwanda. One of the major criticisms during the Rwandan genocide was that Western nations did not take action since Rwanda was not considered a ‘strategic’ state and the conflict there was not considered as important as the Bosnian crisis. Rather the Rwanda conflict was summed up as an event that was simply waiting to happen, as something that was natural and biological and could not be stopped by intervention.

These quotes show a shift from the media treatment of the Rwanda crisis. The reports attempt to make it clear that Kenya is a strategic state and that if the country falls into chaos, the rest of the “volatile” region could follow suit. With such failures like Somalia, Rwanda, and the Sudan, that would be the last thing that the Western nations and international bodies like the United Nations would want.

Democracy Itself Was Under Attack

Another theme that appeared in the articles was the idea that democracy itself was under attack due to the faulty election (12/27/07-12/31/08). This theme was mainly supported by quotes from Kenyan civilians and opposition supporters, and occasionally quotes from Western representatives.
One FOX article stated that “people are demonstrating because of the delayed announcement” (FOX.com, 12/29/2007). BBC quoted a protestor who said that the people were angry because “They [the government] want to steal votes. They are counting votes from regions favoring Kibaki and then they want to declare him the winner” (BBC.com, 12/30/2007). BBC also quoted an ODM spokesman who stated, “Kibaki seems to be going out in a very untidy manner and really is not being respectful or grateful to the democratic practice that put him in power” (BBC.com, 12/29/2007).

Within this overarching theme, three smaller sub-themes emerged portraying the perspectives of different parties. For example, FOX quoted protestors as saying “these are our guns [holding up a rock] but a voting card is our atomic weapon” (FOX.com, 12/30/2007). The theme also appeared in photos such as a man holding a sign that read “Shame on you Kibaki you raped our democracy” (CNN.com, 1/4/2008). The media quoted spokesmen from the opposition party making comments such as “this is about democracy and justice…we shall continue to defend and promote the right of Kenyans so that the democratic process should be fulfilled” because “the train of democracy in Kenya is unstoppable like the flow of the Nile” and “calling for mass action… [and a] march wearing black arm bands because we are mourning” (CNN.com, 1/4/2008; BBC.com, 12/31/2007; MSN.com 12/31/2007).

Media reports also reflected the position of the Kenyan government, quoting official statements stating that the government had “made our nation proud and set a good example for the rest of the continent” and it was a “time for healing and reconciliation” to overcome issues dividing the nation (FOX.com, 12/30/2007; BBC.com, 12/31/2007). A
government representative was quoted saying that Kenya needed to act like a democratic
country and that they had “court systems and laws and orders” and that people needed to
“follow the procedures like they do in other countries with constitutions” (BBC.com, 1/4/2008). MSN quoted another official stating that the protests warranted a “tough crackdown…as rioters rampaged…to protest what they called [Kibaki’s] sham re-
election” (MSN.com, 12/31/2008).

The media also reported the concern of the international community, quoting representatives from the U.S. and France who called “on all political leaders to engage in a spirit of compromise that puts the democratic interests of Kenya first”, acknowledging “there are some real problems…and that those need to be resolved in accordance with their constitution and in accordance with their legal system” (FOX.com, 1/2/2008; BBC.com, 1/1/2008).

Kenya Could Become the Next Rwanda

Another not unexpected theme was the comparison with Rwanda. While ethnicity was most definitely a factor in the conflict, by reminding their readers about Rwanda and the genocide that occurred there, the media presented this ‘ethnic factor’ as a ‘threat’ that trumped the other aspects of the conflict.

Prior to January 1st (the date when the church in Eldoret was attacked), only a few reports mentioned the violence taking on an ethnic dimension. On December 30th, the BBC had a subsection in its article titled “Ethnic Violence” and stated that “much of the violence was enacted along ethnic lines, with Luo supporters of Mr. Odinga clashing with members of Mr. Kibaki’s Kikuyu tribe” (BBC.com, 12/30/2007). MSN attempted to
explain how the ethnicity factor played into politics, stating that “while there are no strong policy differences between the two camps, the bloodshed exposed tribal resentments that have long festered in Kenya…Political loyalties are often tribal-linked, and ethnic gangs were reported attacking rival groups” (MSN.com, 12/31/2007).

January 1st, when the church in Eldoret was attacked, showed a drastic shift in how the conflict was framed by the media and by Kenyan politicians. It is unclear which political party first accused the other of ‘ethnic cleansing’ or ‘genocide’. The BBC quoted a government spokesman who stated that “Raila Odinga’s supporters are engaging in ethnic cleansing and they are not doing it in a haphazard manner, they are doing it in a very well organized, calculated manner…attacking in military precision” and from the other side “it is genocide because the police are killing people” (BBC.com, 1/1/2008; BBC.com, 1/3/2008). Raila Odinga’s accusation that the government was committing something even more sinister than ethnic cleansing, “we can only define it as genocide on a grand scale” and that the government was “guilty, directly, of genocide” was reported by both CNN and MSN (CCN.com, 1/4/2008; MSN.com, 1/1/2008). After this, the media was granted permission to utilize these terms and to make direct references to the Rwandan genocide.

Two of the American media sources made direct comparisons to Rwanda on more than one occasion. In the same article where MSN quoted Raila Odinga calling police attacks “genocide”, the article made the following comparison: “The latest violence recalled scenes from the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, when more than a half-million people were killed” (MSN.com, 1/1/2008). CNN stated that “the ethnic violence,
previously rare in Kenya, is reminiscent of the strife that led to the Rwandan genocide. In a particularly disturbing incident, a mob appears to have burned a church filled with Kenyans seeking refuge from the violence” (CNN.com, 1/1/2008). FOX tended to avoid direct comparisons; however, their descriptions would leave no mistake in their readers’ minds of what was ‘going on’ and would evoke images of the two most recognized genocides, Rwanda and the Holocaust. In one article, they wrote:

Odinga toured Nairobi’s city mortuary, where there were piles of bodies of babies, children, young men and women. Some were burned, while others had head wounds. Many did not have visible wounds. It was unclear when they died, but opposition officials said some were killed Thursday. “What we have seen defies description,” Odinga said after the visit. “We can only describe it as genocide on a grand scale” (FOX.com, 1/3/2008).

Such descriptions appeared in numerous articles, reminding readers of other genocides.

The descriptions of the perpetrators and the victims supported this framing of the ‘ethnic factor’. Some of the common descriptions for the perpetrators included “ethnic group”, “youths from minority tribal groups”, “ethnic gangs”, and the usage of tribal affiliations to identify the perpetrators. While most of the victims described had no identifiers attached to them, there were eighteen instances where the victims were identified by their tribal affiliation. This included the victims at the church in Eldoret and political supporters identified as the perpetrators through their tribal affiliation. Thus, at the height of the violence, the media tended to frame the ‘ethnic factor’ as the most important factor in the crisis.

This trend only lasted for a few days. On January 1st and 2nd, there were references to Rwanda, genocide, and ethnic cleansing. However, after these dates, references to ethnic conflict decreased to only a handful. CNN only made three
references to the ethnic nature of the conflict after January 3, BBC had two, and MSN and FOX both only had one. All of these appeared in quotes from Raila Odinga, Mwai Kibaki, or their spokespersons. Articles were later printed ‘retracting’ the comparison to genocide. For example, MSN quoted an U.S. envoy who stated that the violence was ethnic cleansing but not genocide (MSN.com, 1/30/2008). A Human Rights Watch report which was quoted in all four media sources at the end of January stated that there were signs of ethnic cleansing in some towns, but nothing that constituted genocide (Human Rights Watch, 2008). BBC reported that Raila Odinga “called on his supporters not to "ethnicize" the issue” (BBC.com, 1/1/2008). Unfortunately, reporting at the height of the conflict and at the height of the viewers’ interest had already framed the conflict as ethnic for most readers.

**Kenya Could Become Just Another Failed African State**

CNN made one of the earliest comparisons to other conflicts in Africa, stating that “the violence is rare for Kenya, which has enjoyed relative calm even as war and chronic political violence wracked neighboring countries, such as Ethiopia, Sudan, and Uganda” (CNN.com, 1/1/2008). FOX and MSN made a similar statement that was repeated in three separate articles: “the images of burning churches, machete-wielding gangs, and looters making off with fuel are more common in a region encompassing Somalia and Sudan, but not Kenya” (FOX.com, 1/3/2008, 1/4/2008; MSN.com, 1/3/2008). This comparison was reinforced in reports that Raila Odinga compared Kibaki to a military dictator who seized power “through the “barrel of a gun”” (FOX.com, 12/30/2007; MSN.com, 12/31/2007).
Many of the descriptors used for the perpetrators and for framing the violence tended to support this ‘social chaos’ frame. For the perpetrators, the most common identifiers tended to be “gangs” of “young men”, “rioters”, and “looters”. The victims tended to lack descriptions, thereby making the reader view them as civilians who just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. The framing of the violence also tended to support this idea of social chaos, using descriptors such as “unrest”, “riots”, and “chaos”. Descriptions included “roaming gangs armed with machetes and other homemade weapons burned shops and broke into the homes of their political opponents Saturday in Kibera, the largest slum in Kenya's capital” and quotes such as the following: “‘Let people die and then there will be a change’ (CNN.com, 12/29/2007; FOX.com, 1/4/2008). MSN quoted a Red Cross official who said that “mobs in many provinces were attacking the homes of Kikuyu…rioters even demanded to know the ethnicity of Red Cross workers offering first aid to the wounded” made it appear that the entire country was falling into a state of social chaos (MSN.com, 1/1/2008).

The media also quoted authorities who framed the violence in terms of social chaos. CNN quoted Amos Wako, the Kenyan Attorney General, who said “the level and nature of the violent protest has never before been witnessed in our country and is quickly degenerating into a catastrophe of unimaginable proportions” (CNN.com, 1/4/2008). MSN quoted a person, saying “war is happening here” and “as one of Africa’s top tourist draws and most stable democracies [Kenya now] descends into chaos” (MSN.com, 1/3/2008). However, MSN also quoted a Kenyan politician who stated that Kenya was “not in a civil war” (MSN.com, 1/3/2008). BBC quoted Alfred Mutua, a
government spokesman, who stated that “what we [the government] are clearly saying is that Kenya is not a banana republic, Kenya is not a war-torn country” (BBC.com, 1/4/2008).

Even with such ‘assurances’ from the Kenyan government, the images included in the articles along with the descriptions painted a picture of a country descending into chaos and war. The reports reinforced the stereotypes previously mentioned of Africa as a continent of violence and death.

5.2. Revisiting the Theories on Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict

It is difficult to strictly say that the media framed the ethnic aspect of the conflict as either primordial, instrumental, or constructivist.

Primordialism was not directly expressed through any quote. It tended to dominate the articles, however, due to a lack of information that would dispel Americans’ notions of this being ‘just another African conflict’. The little understanding Americans have of Africa tends to come from previous conflicts that the U.S. became involved in, such as Liberia, Rwanda, and Somalia, as well as the media’s history of presenting Africa as ‘backwards’. During the height of reporting (January 1st and 2nd), the framing made it seem as if ethnicity, something that had been ‘festering’ in the Kenyan people, trumped the political and economic issues that were previously discussed as the cause of the violence, thus reinforcing previous stereotypes. On the occasions that other factors were mentioned, they were normally placed near the end of the article after the ‘ethnic issue’ had been fully discussed, thereby seemingly placing extra emphasis on it. However, the primordial frame remained because there was no clear explanation as to the roots of the
conflict. There were explanations that the Kikuyu “comprise the largest ethnic group in Kenya and are frequently accused by other tribes of monopolizing business and political power” but this power imbalance was treated as an ethnic conflict rather than a political issue (MSN.com, 12/31/2007).

Instrumentalism made an appearance in the articles, although elite manipulation wasn’t confirmed until the end of January. For example, reports stated that the police had been told to use force if necessary to stop the rioters, many of whom were Luo. In numerous articles, the statement that “three police officers independently told Associated Press journalists that they had been ordered to shoot to kill to stop rioters” appeared (MSN.com, 12/31/2007). There were also references to previous elections where “hundreds of people perceived to be opposition supporters were killed and thousands more forced off of their land in politically manipulated violence in Rift Valley and coast provinces”, raising questions about the 2007 election (FOX.com, 12/31/2007). The most obvious references to instrumentalism, however, were the accusations made by each political party against the other concerning ethnic cleansing and genocide, as was shown in the previous analysis sections. In these cases, the representatives and Kibaki and Odinga themselves blatantly accused the other of not only inciting the violence but planning ethnic cleansing or genocide against the opposite group. It was not until the end of January when a Human Rights Watch report stated that the gangs causing the violence had been pressured by community leaders and various party officials from both sides (although mostly from the ODM) to incite the violence (Human Rights Watch, 2008).
5.3. Case Study Comparison: Kenya v. Rwanda

(1) The Rwanda violence was the result of irrational tribalism.

Unlike the Rwanda conflict, Kenya was not framed by the media sources as being ‘irrational’. During the first few days, the conflict was mostly described as being a political conflict with people protesting a sham election. Even when the conflict was later framed as an ethnic conflict, it seemed that there was little ‘irrationality’ involved. Rather, the readers themselves would have thought that the conflict was irrational due to the fact that American viewers/readers tend to not fully understand how ethnicity and tribalism ‘works’ in Africa. Thus, any conflict that is even in some divided along ethnic lines could be viewed as irrational. References to Rwanda and other ‘irrational’ conflicts in Africa could have also stressed that the conflict was the result of ‘irrational tribalism’.

(2) Rwandan people are little better than animals, ranging from the barbaric to the helpless and pathetic.

Unlike the Rwandan conflict, this theme did not really appear in the Kenyan case. There were no references that implied that Kenyans were some form of animal. Rather, Kenyans were generally described as protestors/demonstrators, rioters and looters, policemen or civilians. There was little evidence that the media sources framed Kenyans as being barbaric or as helpless and pathetic either. The only period when ‘barbaric’ may have been applied would have been the attack in Eldoret. The ‘helpless and pathetic’ frame did not occur in these articles since the reports did not concentrate much on those who were displaced or victims in the conflict.
(3) The violence is incomprehensible, and thus is explained through comparison to Biblical myths, supernatural causes, natural disasters, or diseases.

Unlike the Rwanda case, this theme did not appear with Kenya. There was no reference to any Biblical myths or to hell. Nor were there comparisons to natural disasters like floods. Instead, it seems as if Rwanda itself became the ‘Biblical myth’. When the articles mentioned Rwanda, Somalia, Uganda, or other East African nations, they tend to draw up images in the readers’ minds of chaos and death. The terms ‘genocide’ and ‘ethnic cleansing’ seem to have taken the place of the comparisons from Wall’s study.

(4) Neighboring African countries are just as violent and thus unable to help solve Rwanda’s problems.

This theme did and did not appear in the Kenya case. It did appear in that the articles mentioned how other East African countries faced their own crises and how they were dependent on Kenya for daily staples like cooking oil and fuel. However, the Kenya case also showed an opposite trend. At the height of the conflict, the opposition on the African Union to send in a team of investigators and to have key African figures act as mediators (President Kufour of Ghana, and South Africa’s Cyril Ramaphosa). This shows that there was an attempt by other African countries to mediate the conflict. In the end, mediation was undertaken by Kofi Annan, who tended to be identified as the former United Nations Secretary General.
(5) Only the West is capable of solving Rwanda’s problems.

In some ways, the above point, especially in reference to Kofi Annan, could support this view. Kofi Annan became involved mainly as the former UN Secretary General (which is generally considered to be a Western-dominated institution) rather than as a former Ghanaian ambassador. Depending on how the reader views the United Nations, this theme could be considered as present in reporting on the Kenya conflict. It is important to note that the officials quoted in the articles tended to either be Kenyan officials or Western officials pressing for a solution to the problem. However, while a large amount of attention was paid to Western leaders, there was also a great deal of stress on a “made-in-Kenya” solution (MSN.com, 1/3/2008).

In conclusion, it can be said that while major Western media have a long way to go in reporting on African conflicts in a way that moves beyond simple stereotypes, there is improvement when compared to reporting fifteen years ago on Rwanda.
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There are a number of recommendations that can be made to improve the way American media (CNN, MSN, FOX) reports on Africa.

(1) First, rather than presenting the story in a way that the viewer can ‘understand’, the media should be more concerned with presenting the background that has led up to a crisis. American media needs to rely less on up-to-the-minute reporting and concentrate more on in-depth reporting. By concentrating on getting the story out first, reporters miss the underlying story, especially at the height of viewer interest. While it is important to get the story out, there should be some form of responsible reporting going on at the same time that attempts to explain the ‘bigger picture’.

(2) Second, there needs to be less dependence on wire-service news sources such as Associated Press and Reuters. American media tends to get most of their news from these sources. By relying on one version of the story, the media sources are already biased by the frame used by their source. After they receive the story, the media tends to pick the bits and pieces of the story that would be most interesting to readers. It is for this reason that MSN and FOX, the two sources that depend on Associated Press, still have such differing reports from the same information.

(3) Third, reporting needs to be done by those who know about the society and culture and can report nuances that reporters who are simply ‘parachuted’ in would not understand. This relates to the previous point in that wire services
like the Associated Press tend to send reporters to locations when there is a story (See Appendix A on sources quoted by different media and Appendix B on treatment of location of conflict in different media). If FOX and MSN rely on services like the Associated Press to get the news, the reports they get are not from those who understand the context in which the conflict is occurring.

(4) American media needs to stop comparing all African events/conflicts to Rwanda, Somalia, Liberia, etc. This does a disservice to Africans and to the American public because it makes readers think they understand the conflicts that occur in Africa. However, conflict emerged in a complex historical and social context and should not be treated in terms of a simple frame such as ‘African tribalism’ in order to make the story easier to understand.
APPENDIX A: PEOPLE QUOTED

BBC

BBC generally tended to speak to official government spokesman, having nineteen quotes from various Kenyan, American, and European government officials. Within this category, BBC quoted Kenyan officials ten times, American officials four times, and European officials five times. The second most popular quoted groups were reporters and other members of the Western media. This normally tended to be BBC reporters who were in Kenyan and making reports to the central BBC office. The third most common quotes came from quotes made by the two candidates, mainly from reports they made to other sources or repeats of statements they made at an earlier conference. BBC also spent a good amount of time speaking to Kenyan civilians who were not involved in the violence, representatives from international NGOs like the United Nations, and local and international observers from the election.

CNN

CNN also tended to quote government officials more than any other groups. Overall, there were sixteen quotes from officials, with eleven from Kenyan officials, five from American officials, and none from European officials. The next largest group was local and international observers of the election with ten quotes. CNN also quoted a large number of NGO representatives, with seven quotes.
MSN

MSN interviewed a large number of civilians in their articles, having eighteen quotes from civilians who were not involved in the violence following the election. The cable news source also quoted a large number of government officials, with five quotes coming from Kenyan politicians and three quotes each from American and European officials. As far as the other categories go, MSN did not pay particular attention to these other groups, only getting about two to three quotes from representatives of each of these categories.

FOX

FOX also tended to interview a large number of civilians followed by a large number of quotes from government officials. They quoted seven Kenyan government officials and five American officials. European officials had the least number of quotes with only two statements made. FOX also had a large number of quotes made by the two presidential candidates. The other groups were paid minimal attention, with certain groups only giving four or five quotes each.
Figure 7: People Quoted by Category
### Table 2: People Quoted by Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>People Quoted</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>BBC</th>
<th>MSNBC</th>
<th>CNN</th>
<th>FOXNEWS</th>
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<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
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<td>0</td>
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<td>2</td>
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APPENDIX B: LOCATION OF THE VIOLENCE

When analyzing the data concerning the location of the violence, two trends appeared with all of the sources: (1) the media reported that the violence was country wide, or (2) the media would report on specific cities/regions where the disruption was occurring.

In general, the media sources tended to either name specific cities or provinces with little to no explanation as to where these cities are located in the country or they would use very general descriptions of where the violence was occurring (such as ‘western Kenya’, ‘the coastal region’, or ‘highlands’). It is interesting to note that the media sources would also specifically state that a lot of the violence was occurring in Kenya’s slum areas, thereby attaching a whole new context to the violence that would not have appeared if the media simply gave the name of the slums without explaining the significance of these locations.

BBC

BBC tended to provide the most information as to where the violence was occurring in Kenya, giving locations 58 times, with more than ten cities and five provinces identified by name. The most commonly identified cities were Kisumu (N=8), Eldoret (N=7), and Nairobi (N=6). The most commonly identified regions were the Rift Valley region (N=3) and Western Kenya (N=3).
CNN

CNN only had 21 instances where location of the violence was discussed. Within those 21 instances, there were only 8 individual locations identified, with Nairobi (N=4) and Eldoret (N=4) being the most mentioned cities. However, CNN also tended to discuss the violence as occurring in ‘Kenya’ (N=4) rather than providing specific cities or regions or would discuss them as occurring in ‘Nairobi’s slums’ or ‘Nairobi’s outskirts’ (N=4).

MSN

MSN had 25 instances where locations were identified. The most common identifier tended to be in relation to slums (N=6). These include variations such as ‘Kenya’s slums’, ‘Nairobi’s slums’, ‘the Mathare slum’, and ‘the Kibera slum’. This was followed by Kibera (N=4), Mombasa (N=3), and general descriptions (N=3). The general descriptions tended to be rather poetic in nature, stating that the violence spread from the capital and its slums to the coast.

FOX

FOX had 32 identified locations in its articles during the first week. The most commonly identified location was Kibera (N=5), followed by Mathare (N=4), Nairobi (N=4), and variations of ‘Nairobi’s slums/shantytowns’ (N=4). Mombasa and Western Kenya each had the same number of mention (N=3).
Analysis

The four media sources varied in their reporting of locations of the violence. CNN generally tended to described the violence as occurring either in slum areas (N=4), in Nairobi (N=4), or in Kenya as a whole (N=4). MSN, on the other hand, leaned more towards describing the violence that occurred in slum areas like Kibera (N=10). FOX acted similarly to MSN, reporting mostly on the violence in the slum areas such as Kibera or Mathare (N=13).

Unlike the other three news sources, BBC tended to name the locations of the violence in relation to the city it occurred in. This is one of the reasons why BBC had such a large number of locations in the data (N=58). Unfortunately, although the British news source tried to be as accurate as possible in its reporting, the articles did not place the locations in a context that those who were not familiar with Kenya would understand without the assistance of a very well-made map.

As a whole, the four sources generally presented the violence as occurring all throughout the country even though the majority of the cities and regions they named were in the western part of the country. They also tended to describe the violence that occurred in the slum areas although some locations where intense conflict was occurring was mentioned such as Eldoret or Busia.

The following maps are from the website, Ushahidi.com. Ushahadi.com gathered reports of violence from witnesses who either blogged or sent text messages of violence they had witnessed in their cities. Although the website is based on both confirmed and
unconfirmed acts of violence, they show that the violence generally occurred in the western regions of the country. This supports the data that were found in the articles.

Figure 8: Ushahidi.com Map


News Articles


