Cohesion or Collapse? The Role of Party Discipline in Shaping the Stability of Kenyan Political Coalitions

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ABSTRACT

Political coalitions and party dynamics have played a crucial role in shaping Kenya's journey, both before and after gaining independence in 1963. The political scene has often been marked by shifting alliances, which have led to instability and challenges in governance, impacting the lives of everyday citizens. This study takes a closer look at how coalition formations and party discipline have evolved in Kenya, particularly focusing on the influence of party discipline on political coalitions since 1945. The study was anchored on Social Exchange theory. The study was carried out in Kenya covering 18 counties within the study period. The study was founded on interpretivism research philosophy. Historical research design was used to guide the study. The target population composed of the ordinary voters, leaders of political parties, leaders of Civic organizations, local intelligentsia and experts on historical matters. The sample size was 454 respondents which was reached upon content saturation. This included a sample of 432 ordinary voters, 8 leaders of political parties, 6 respondents from civic organizations, 4 leaders from local intelligentsia, and 4 experts on historical matters. Purposive, snowball and convenience sampling techniques were used in the selection of the respondents. Primary data was collected using questionnaires, focus group discussion guides and interview schedules. Document analysis guide was used to collect both archival and secondary data. Qualitative data was analyzed based on themes and presented through narratives and verbatim quotations. The findings reveal that strong internal party coherence and discipline are vital for effective governance and meeting the needs of the public. The study concludes that the level of party discipline directly affects how political coalitions form and succeed in Kenya. To improve coalition effectiveness, the study recommends that political parties establish clear internal rules, promote inclusive decision-making, and strengthen their organizational structures.

Keywords: Coalition Formation, Kenyan Political Coalitions, Local Intelligentsia, Party Cohesion, Party Discipline, Party Leadership

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I. INTRODUCTION

Political parties, as understood today, were not present in the same structured form in ancient civilizations like Greece and Rome. Instead, these societies functioned through coalition-like alliances among political leaders or factions. In Athens, for example, political leaders from aristocratic families formed alliances to influence decision-making in the Assembly. The Peloponnesian War (431-404 BC) exemplified this, with city-states aligning into coalitions like the Delian League led by Athens and the Peloponnesian League led by Sparta, driven by shared interests and strategic necessities (Kagan, 2003).

The Roman Republic also showcased coalition dynamics through factions (factio), where powerful individuals or families competed for resources and influence. The formation of the first Triumvirate in 60 BC, comprising Julius Caesar, Pompey, and Crassus, marked an informal alliance aimed at consolidating power rather than establishing formal political parties (Flower, 2010). The Second Triumvirate further illustrated this trend, as Octavian, Mark Antony, and Marcus Lepidus sought to maintain control amid political instability.

As societies progressed, particularly during the 17th and 18th centuries, the Enlightenment fostered the development of parliamentary systems in Europe and the emergence of political parties. Early political parties, such as the Whigs and Tories in Britain, lacked the cohesion seen in contemporary political structures, often relying on personal patronage and informal alliances (Pincus, 2009). The French Revolution introduced political clubs and factions that were fluid, complicating the establishment of firm party structures and discipline (Schama, 1989).

Post-World War I and II, the necessity for coalition governments grew, particularly in fragmented European nations. Countries like Italy, France, and Belgium formed coalitions to stabilize and address reconstruction challenges. This period saw an increase in party discipline as political parties aimed for unity to present a coherent front (Lijphart, 1999). Wolfgang and Strom's research highlights the significance of power-sharing within coalitions in Western Europe, emphasizing the role of proportional representation electoral systems in facilitating coalition governance (Wolfgang & Strom, 2003).

In Central Eastern Europe, fragmented party systems necessitate coalition formations, as seen in Poland and Hungary, where no single party holds a majority. Müller emphasizes the importance of ethnic and minority representation in ensuring political stability and effective governance within these coalitions (Müller, 2004). David Farrell's work further explores how evolving party systems adapt to societal changes, particularly in multi-party contexts like Italy, where coalition-building is essential for governance (Farrell, 2011).

In emerging democracies like India, South Africa, and Kenya, coalition governments have been formed to represent diverse socio-cultural interests. In South Africa, the African National Congress (ANC) has had to navigate coalition dynamics at the municipal level, where party discipline is crucial for effective governance (Mattes & Richmond, 2015). Nigeria's political landscape has also seen coalitions, such as the All-Progressives Congress (APC), which emerged victorious through a coalition of opposition parties (Adebisi, 2018).

In Zimbabwe, the Movement for Democratic Change Alliance (MDC-Alliance) faced challenges in maintaining cohesion due to differing priorities among member parties (Makonye, 2019). Similarly, Kenya's multi-ethnic society has led to various coalition governments, such as the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC), which successfully challenged the long-ruling Kenya African National Union (KANU) in 2002 but later fragmented due to internal conflicts (Elischer, 2010).

These historical examples illustrate the inherent challenges of maintaining party discipline within coalition governments, where diverse ideologies and interests often lead to negotiation and compromise. The tension between unity within parties and cooperation in coalition governance remains a persistent challenge for political systems worldwide. The study aims to delve into the historical narrative of coalition politics in Kenya since 1945, focusing on the role of party discipline in navigating the complexities of governance in a multi-ethnic context.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Ideally, political coalitions are intended to operate cohesively with shared objectives. But in Kenya, they often struggle to uphold ideals of unity and responsiveness to citizens' needs, sometimes prioritizing political interests over the public good. While some coalitions demonstrate effective cooperation, others face internal dissent and instability.

Although studies on coalition politics in Kenya exist, such as those by Biegon (2008), Kadima and Owuor (2014), Elischer (2008), Oyugi (2006), and Etyang (2021), a notable gap has been identified regarding the insufficient coverage of the historical context of coalition politics, particularly from 1945, concerning party discipline and its impact on the functioning of political coalitions. Against this background, the study aimed to address this gap by tracing the history of coalition politics and party discipline in Kenya over the decades.

1.2 Research Objective

The specific objective of the study was to evaluate how party discipline has impacted political coalitions in Kenya since 1945.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Review
2.1.1 The Social Exchange Theory

The theory was initially proposed by George Homans in 1958 and further developed by Peter Blau in the 1960s (Cook *et al.*, 2013). The theory guided the study by providing a framework to evaluate the impact of party discipline on the durability of political coalitions. This theory was applied to understand the dynamics of political alliances and the influence of party discipline on their sustainability, with specific reference to specific political coalitions such as NARC formed in 2002 and the Jubilee Coalition formed in 2013. In the context of the study, the theory was used to analyze the relationships between political parties within these coalitions. It was employed to evaluate the costs and benefits associated with maintaining party discipline within these alliances. The theory was used to assess the efforts and resources invested by individual parties in upholding the coalition agreements and maintaining discipline among their members.

2.2 Empirical Review

The concept of party discipline has been extensively studied in the context of political systems around the world. Scholars have argued that strong party discipline is crucial for maintaining the stability and effectiveness of political coalitions (Kam, 2009). In a study of European parliamentary democracies, Depauw and Martin (2009) found that party discipline is a key factor in determining the cohesion and longevity of governing coalitions. Tsebelis (1995) examined the impact of party discipline on the decision-making process in parliamentary democracies, highlighting the importance of cohesive party structures in maintaining the stability of governing coalitions. Strøm (1990) further explored the relationship between party discipline and the longevity of coalition governments, emphasizing the role of intra-party dynamics in coalition formation and survival.

In Africa, the role of party discipline in shaping political coalitions has been a subject of ongoing research. Gyimah-Boadi (2004) examined the impact of party discipline on the stability of multiparty democracies in West Africa, highlighting the challenges posed by factionalism and party defections. Similarly, Lindberg (2007) explored the dynamics of party discipline and coalition-building in several Sub-Saharan African countries, emphasizing the importance of strong party structures and leadership. Randall and Svåsand (2002) analyzed the challenges of party-building in emerging democracies in Africa, emphasizing the importance of party discipline and organizational coherence in the consolidation of multiparty systems. Sartori (1976) provided a broader theoretical framework for understanding the role of political parties in shaping the stability of democratic regimes, with insights that can be applied to the African context.

Scholars have investigated the role of party discipline in shaping political coalitions in the East Africa. Tripp (2010) analyzed the emergence and collapse of political coalitions in Uganda, emphasizing the influence of party discipline and intra-party dynamics. Likewise, Kelsall (2012) examined the interplay between party discipline and coalition stability in Tanzania, suggesting that the fragmentation of political parties has been a significant challenge. Morse (2018) examined the dynamics of coalition-building in Tanzania, highlighting the influence of party discipline and the challenges posed by party defections. Therkildsen (2009) explored the role of party discipline in the political processes of Uganda, emphasizing the impact of patronage networks and the fragmentation of political parties.

In Kenya, the relationship between party discipline and the stability of political coalitions has been a subject of intense scholarly interest. Elischer (2013) explored the evolution of political parties and coalitions in Kenya, highlighting the impact of party switching and the lack of strong party structures on the durability of governing alliances. Cheeseman et al. (2014) further analyzed the dynamics of coalition-building in Kenya, emphasizing the role of ethnic identities and the influence of party discipline on the resilience of political alliances.

Nyangoro (1995) analyzed the evolution of political parties and coalitions in Kenya, emphasizing the role of ethnic identities and the influence of party discipline on the stability of governing alliances. Ndegwa (1997) further examined the impact of multiparty democracy on the Kenyan political landscape, highlighting the importance of party discipline in shaping the dynamics of coalition-building.

The existing literature provided valuable insights into the dynamics of party discipline and coalition stability in various contexts, but there was a need for a more focused study that specifically examines the Kenyan case. The Kenyan political landscape has unique characteristics, such as the influence of ethnic identities and the historical evolution of political parties, which have not been fully captured in the broader literature. Additionally, while the existing studies primarily focused on specific time periods or snapshots of political developments, a study that spanned the post-independence era would have offered a more in-depth understanding of the long-term trends and patterns in coalition dynamics. Finally, there was a need for a more in-depth examination of how party discipline specifically influenced the durability and effectiveness of political alliances in the Kenyan context, which would have contributed to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms through which party discipline shaped the stability of Kenyan political coalitions.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted historical research design. A historical research design is a methodological approach employed in the study of past events, developments, and phenomena (White, 1984). Historical research design involves the systematic collection, examination, and interpretation of primary and secondary sources to reconstruct narratives, identify patterns, and draw conclusions about historical processes. The historical research design was essential for analyzing coalition politics and party discipline in Kenya, allowing for a detailed examination of the contextual factors, events, and political structures shaping the country's political landscape.

3.2 Study Location

The study was carried out in Kenya focusing on eighteen counties across four regions: the former Western region (Bungoma, Busia, Kakamega, and Vihiga), the former Nyanza region (Migori, Kisumu, Homa Bay, Kisii, Nyamira, and Siaya), and the former Rift Valley region (Trans Nzoia, Kericho, Turkana, Elgeyo Marakwet, Uasin Gishu, Nandi, and Nakuru), along with Nairobi County.

3.3 Target Population

Creswell describes the target population as "the entire group about which the researcher wants to generalize the study findings (Creswell, 2021). The target population was drawn from the leadership of political parties, leadership of civic organizations involved in promotion of civic education, experts on historical matters and local intelligentsia.

3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

"Sample size is the number of units that are selected from the population to be studied. It is typically a subset of the population and is used to draw inferences about the larger population," (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). According to Creswell, "Sampling techniques are the procedures used to select a subset of individuals or items from a larger population for the purpose of making inferences about the population. The choice of sampling technique can significantly impact the validity and reliability of research findings" (Creswell, 2021).

The study employed purposive, snowball, and convenient sampling techniques, resulting in a final sample size of 454 respondents after achieving content saturation. This included 400 conveniently sampled voters and 32 from four Focus Group Discussions (eight members each). Additionally, purposive and snowball methods were used to select eight political party leaders, six civic organization leaders, four local intelligentsia members, and four historical experts. Respondents were drawn from 18 counties across four regions: the former Western region (Bungoma, Busia, Kakamega, Vihiga), former Nyanza region (Migori, Kisumu, Homa Bay, Kisii, Nyamira, Siaya), former Rift Valley region (Trans Nzoia, Kericho, Turkana, Elgeyo Marakwet, Uasin Gishu, Nandi, Nakuru), and Nairobi County.

3.5 Data Collection Instrument

A qualitative approach was adopted and thus philosophical materials and tools were adopted in data collection and analysis. The study employed qualitative methods for data collection, incorporating semi-structured interviews to gather detailed insights and document analysis to provide contextual information. Open-ended questionnaires served as the primary tool for data gathering. This combination of approaches enabled a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of coalition politics and party discipline in Kenya.

3.6 Data Analysis

The research utilized various methodologies for analyzing and presenting data, including thematic analysis, content analysis. In the historical analysis approach, data analysis entailed the review of historical documents, archival documents, and records concerning political events, alliances, and party formations in Kenya throughout different periods. The researcher examined primary sources such as official documents and speeches to trace the evolution of coalition politics in the country. By analyzing these historical sources, patterns, trends, and key turning points in coalition formation and party discipline were identified. Qualitative data was analyzed based on themes and presented through narratives and verbatim quotations.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The researcher prioritized ethical considerations throughout the study by ensuring the protection and respect of participants. This included obtaining necessary permissions from relevant authorities, securing informed consent through signed forms that detailed the study's purpose and confidentiality measures, and acknowledging all sources of secondary data to prevent plagiarism. The researcher also respected the local cultural attitudes of respondents, guaranteed confidentiality, and maintained transparency by providing final copies of the thesis to relevant authorities.

IV. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 Party Discipline and Coalition Politics in Kenya
4.1.1 Party Discipline in the Colonial Era (1945-1963)

Political entities like the Kenya African Union (KAU), Kenya African National Union (KANU), Kikuyu Central Association (KCA), and the Mau Movement emphasized strong party discipline to maintain unity, coordinate efforts, and mobilize support for independence from colonial rule. This internal cohesion was vital for effective decision-making and resilience against colonial oppression. During an oral interview, an informant reiterated that:

"*Although not a formal political party, the Mau demonstrated high levels of discipline through mechanisms such as oaths of secrecy, hierarchical structures, and ideological indoctrination, ensuring commitment and unity among members*". (O.I, Herman Manyora, Fountain of Knowledge UoN, Nairobi, 21st November 2023.)

Interestingly, the colonial administration viewed disciplined political groups as less likely to resist colonial rule, employing divide-and-rule strategies to exploit internal divisions and weaken unity among political organizations.

4.1.2 The First Republic (1964-1990)

KANU emerged as the dominant political party, effectively functioning as a one-party state. Under President Jomo Kenyatta, strict discipline was enforced, with dissent being intolerable. KANU absorbed rival parties, such as KADU, to consolidate power and eliminate competition.

According to the weekly review:

…in order to stem the tide of defections from the ruling party into the opposition party, the government had to act fast. A law was quickly passed that mandated that any sitting member of parliament who quit KANU to join the PKU or any other political party would automatically lose his parliamentary seat and had to go back to the electorate to seek a new mandate. This law stemmed the tide of defections from KANU and some MPs who had earlier indicated their intention to quit the ruling party to join the opposition, changed their minds and decided to stay within the KANU fold after weighing the odds. Under pressure by KANU and the government, even some of the leaders such as Kaggia who had quit eventually returned to KANU. With only a few legal strokes, KANU had succeeded in completely stifling the growth of the KPU into a national opposition. (KNADS: *The Weekly Review*, June 8, 1990)

Kenyatta's leadership exemplified authoritarian control, with punitive measures against dissenters. Notable figures like Bildad Kaggia and J.M. Kariuki faced expulsion for criticizing the government, highlighting the oppressive nature of political discipline (Harms, 2021). The government enacted laws to prevent defections from KANU, further entrenching its dominance. The 1969 amendment legalized KANU as the sole political party, limiting political pluralism and dissent. Despite KANU's dominance, internal divisions arose due to personal ambitions and ethnic tensions, leading to the emergence of opposition factions like the Kenya People's Union (KPU).

Based on the foregoing findings, the researcher argues that KANU's emergence as the dominant political party in Kenya under President Jomo Kenyatta exemplifies the dynamics of authoritarian control and party discipline, aligning with the findings of Elischer (2013), who highlights the impact of strong party structures on the durability of governing alliances. The punitive measures against dissenters, such as Bildad Kaggia and J.M. Kariuki, reflect Harms' (2021) assertion that authoritarian regimes employ legal frameworks to stifle political pluralism and dissent, as evidenced by the 1969 amendment that effectively legalized KANU's monopoly on political power. This consolidation was further reinforced by legislation that penalized defections, compelling members to remain loyal to KANU, which resonates with Lindberg's (2007) findings on the significance of strong party discipline in coalition stability.

4.1.3 The Second Phase (1978-1990)

After Kenyatta's death, Daniel Arap Moi consolidated power, transforming KANU into a de facto one-party state by 1982. According to the weekly review, President Moi who took over the reins of power immediately after Kenyatta's death on August 22, 1978, had more faith in the ruling party than his predecessor had had, especially during the later years of his rule. Soon after he became president, Moi set about resuscitating the party from the grassroots, an exercise that had previously proved well-nigh impossible for the party bosses. KANU elections were held in November 1978, which placed a completely new leadership at the helm (KNADS: *The Weekly Review*, June 8, 1990)

Moi's leadership emphasized strict discipline, suppressing dissent through purges and arrests. Moi's regime expelled notable dissenters, such as Jaramogi Oginga Odinga and George Anyona, to maintain control. This authoritarian approach stifled internal democracy within KANU, fostering a culture of fear. The government controlled media outlets to promote KANU's agenda, stifling alternative voices and dissent. Referring to Moi's leadership skills during his era, Noah Wekesa elucidated:

"*…Moi's leadership style within KANU emphasized an authoritarian control mechanism that aimed to consolidate power. Moi's approach centralized authority within the party, transforming KANU into an instrument of the state……the strict enforcement of party discipline under his rule stifled dissent and opposition within the party ranks. Dissenting voices were swiftly silenced through disciplinary measures, as seen in the expulsion of notable figures like Jaramogi Oginga Odinga and George Anyona, who challenged Moi's leadership or criticized party policies. This lack of internal democracy curtailed open debate and discussion within KANU, fostering a culture of fear and limited opposition viewpoints*". (O.I, Noah Wekesa, Kitale, 16th November, 2023)

The study established that Moi utilized stringent party discipline as a means to secure unwavering compliance with decisions made by the party hierarchy (Mutizwa-Mangiza, 2013). Members were expected to unquestionably follow the directives issued by the leadership, reinforcing Moi's authority and control over KANU. This disciplined adherence further cemented Moi's dominance within the party, creating a structure that limited dissent and facilitated his grip on power, ultimately ensuring a lack of internal challenges to his leadership within KANU.
Bifwoli Wakoli recounts:

> "…*the enforcement of party discipline within KANU was integral, especially during electoral periods. Party discipline played a crucial role in maintaining unwavering loyalty among KANU members, who were expected to campaign relentlessly for the party during elections. Deviation from the party line was met with disciplinary measures or exclusion from party activities, showcasing the stringent enforcement of discipline to ensure unity and cohesion within KANU*". (O.I, Bifwoli Wakoli, Highway hotel, Bungoma, 14th November, 2023)

The KANU government's suppression of media freedom and dissenting voices was not unique to Kenya, as similar tactics were employed by authoritarian regimes in other African countries, such as Nigeria under military dictatorships, and globally, like in Chile under Pinochet's rule and Argentina during the "Dirty War". However, despite the opposition's continued suppression, a thriving counter-culture emerged within the mainstream Kenyan media, as exemplified by the satirical work of Wahome Mutahi, which challenged the status quo through creative expression. Despite repression, pro-democracy activists mobilized for reforms, leading to the eventual repeal of the one-party state in 1991. This transition marked a significant shift toward multiparty democracy in Kenya.

4.1.4 The Multiparty Era in Kenya (1990 Onwards)

Formation of FORD and Early Multiparty Politics: The Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (FORD) emerged as an umbrella organization led by clerics and civil rights lawyers, aiming to repeal constitutional provisions against political pluralism. Initially, FORD unified various ethnic and professional groups under a nationalist vision. After the legalization of political parties, political aggregation reflected ethnic management through coalitions. KANU, under President Moi, became a personalized instrument for his Kalenjin group, while opposition parties coalesced around Kikuyu and Luo ethnic groups, marginalized under Moi's regime.

Internal conflicts within FORD, particularly between professional leaders and old-guard politicians, led to its fragmentation before the 1992 elections, undermining its competitiveness against KANU. The *Weekly Review* sources revealed:

> "*Internal political differences within the party's hierarchy persisted within FORD Asili. Martin Shikuku, tha party's Secretary-General, has been accused of betraying the party by secretly influencing the defections of FORD Asili MPs in Kakamega district to KANU. Kenneth Matiba did not escape blame either for neglecting Western Province during the recent by-elections campaigns in which the party suffered a big blow after losing the three seats to KANU*". (KNADS/sf.40/21/12. Security Intelligence Report. June 1994.)

The fragmentation of FORD coincided with mass defections from KANU, as members took advantage of the new political pluralism. While some defectors joined the FORD factions, a significant group of Kikuyu leaders, led by former Vice-President Mwai Kibaki, formed the Democratic Party (DP) as a more moderate alternative. The DP projected an image of professionalism and economic competence, unlike the populist and ideological divisions within FORD.

Post-2002 Political Landscape: In the post-2002 period of Kenyan politics, several key coalitions were formed, each with its own dynamics and impact on the country's political landscape.

The National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) emerged in Kenya in 2002, uniting diverse political parties and leaders to challenge the long-standing Kenya African National Union (KANU) regime (Etyang, 2022). Etyang also observes that the formation of NARC exemplifies the tenet of reciprocity in social exchange theory, which posits that social interactions are driven by the mutual benefits individuals seek (Homans, 1958). Diverse political parties united to challenge the long-standing KANU regime, recognizing that collaboration would enhance their chances of electoral success (Mukhwana, 2005). By pooling resources and voter bases, they engaged in a reciprocal relationship, where each party contributed its strengths in exchange for a share of power and influence, thereby fostering trust and cooperation essential for the coalition's effectiveness (Kanyinga, 2009; Oucho, 2003).

However, the coalition's promise of a new era of governance faltered due to challenges in maintaining party discipline. One significant impact was the lack of a unified ideological front, stemming from the diverse backgrounds and agendas of its member parties and leaders. This absence of a shared vision made it difficult to enforce cohesive party discipline, leading to internal conflicts and power struggles (Elischer, 2008). For instance, clashes between

different factions within NARC often sidelined policy discussions and hindered the implementation of the coalition's agenda, leaving promises unfulfilled and diminishing public trust.

Infighting and power struggles among NARC members further weakened the coalition's stability. The absence of strong leadership and ineffective governance intensified internal conflicts, eroding unity and impeding policy implementation (Masime & Kibara, 2003) Leaders' pursuit of personal ambitions often superseded the coalition's collective goals, highlighting the breakdown in party discipline. This was evident in the failure to effectively manage disagreements, resulting in a lack of consensus on crucial policy issues. The resultant gridlock within the coalition significantly contributed to its inability to govern cohesively and deliver on its electoral promises.

The Party of National Unity (PNU): The Party of National Unity (PNU) coalition, formed in 2007 to support the re-election of President Mwai, demonstrated the crucial role of party discipline in sustaining a governing alliance. While the coalition's collective discipline during the 2007 elections contributed to its success, internal frictions and a lack of cohesion in managing conflicting interests among its members eventually posed a threat to PNU's durability. The coalition's inability to maintain party discipline, particularly in policy implementation and managing coalition expectations, led to internal divisions, defections, and ultimately the dissolution of PNU in 2012, underscoring the importance of strong party structures and unified party behavior in ensuring the longevity and effectiveness of governing coalitions.

The study observes that the internal divisions and defections that led to PNU's dissolution in 2012 underscore the findings of Lindberg (2007), who emphasizes that without unified party behavior, the effectiveness and longevity of governing coalitions are significantly compromised. This case illustrates the necessity for cohesive party structures to navigate the complexities of coalition governance effectively.

Formation of the Grand Coalition Government: The Grand Coalition Government formed in 2008 in response to the post-election crisis and violence in Kenya. Party discipline within the coalition, exemplified by the cooperation between the rival parties PNU and ODM, played a pivotal role in the government's success. The disciplined approach allowed the coalition to restore peace, initiate a national reconciliation process, and achieve key goals such as the adoption of a new constitution in 2010. This constitution introduced critical reforms, including a devolved system of government, a bill of rights, and more inclusive and accountable governance. Despite their political differences, the PNU and ODM members maintained party discipline, which ensured the stability and effectiveness of the Grand Coalition Government in addressing the country's pressing issues, promoting national healing, and laying the foundations for Kenya's political and governance reforms.

Commenting on the achievements of the Grand Coalition, Wafula Wakoko enlightened:

> *"...the Grand Coalition Government was instrumental in bringing stability to Kenya after the post-election violence of 2007-2008. By forming a coalition between the rival parties, PNU and ODM, it helped quell political tensions and facilitated the healing process. The government established the Commission of Inquiry into Post-Election Violence (the Waki Commission) and initiated the Special Tribunal for the prosecution of post-election violence suspects. These actions demonstrated a commitment to accountability and reconciliation".* (O.I, Wafula Wakoko, ORPP offices, Nairobi, 3rd January 2024)

The study observes that the formation of the Grand Coalition Government in 2008 marked a significant response to the post-election crisis in Kenya, highlighting the importance of party discipline in ensuring stability amidst political rivalry. This aligns with Kam (2009), who emphasizes that strong party discipline is essential for the effectiveness of coalitions, as demonstrated by the cooperation between the PNU and ODM in restoring peace and initiating a national reconciliation process.

Despite being a coalition government, PNU and ODM had different policy priorities and political objectives. This occasionally led to disagreements and power struggles within the coalition (Etyang, 2022). Disagreements over the implementation of key reforms, such as land and constitutional changes, created tensions within the government. The slow progress in addressing these issues became a source of dissatisfaction for many Kenyans.

Formation of Jubilee Coalition: The Jubilee Coalition, formed in 2013, united the United Republican Party (URP) and The National Alliance (TNA) to consolidate support against opposition. Party discipline was crucial for their electoral success, allowing cohesive strategies and policy implementation. However, internal power struggles emerged, challenging this discipline. Despite these issues, the coalition maintained unity through the 2017 elections, indicating moderate durability.

During a focus group discussion, members revealed that party discipline facilitated effective policy implementation within the Jubilee Coalition, allowing members to adhere to a shared agenda. This unity helped manage internal disagreements, particularly regarding leadership roles and resource allocation. The coalition's disciplined approach also bolstered public perception and credibility, enabling it to address external pressures effectively.

Despite presenting a united front, the Jubilee Coalition faced tensions over leadership positions and resource distribution, leading to internal factions. As the coalition gained influence, competing factions emerged, straining unity.

The coalition's electoral success raised public expectations, making it challenging to deliver on promises amid allegations of electoral irregularities.

Formation of CORD: The Coalition for Reforms and Democracy (CORD) was established in 2012 to oppose the Jubilee Alliance. CORD's discipline helped maintain unity, allowing it to challenge Jubilee effectively during the 2013 elections. However, internal divisions and power struggles among member parties undermined its cohesion, ultimately leading to disintegration before the 2017 elections.

Formation of NASA: The National Super Alliance (NASA) was formed in 2017 to challenge the Jubilee Coalition. Despite internal disagreements, party discipline allowed NASA to present a united front and coordinate effectively during the elections. However, post-election disputes and external pressures highlighted the complexities of maintaining unity within the coalition.

The Jubilee Alliance Post-2017 Elections: After the 2017 elections, the Jubilee Alliance evolved into the Jubilee Party, emphasizing party discipline in legislative processes. However, internal dissent and differing interests among members strained unity, particularly between President Kenyatta and Deputy President Ruto. This erosion of discipline impacted the party's credibility and cohesion.

The Jubilee Party faced significant internal challenges, including power struggles and differing political ambitions among leaders, notably between Kenyatta and Ruto. These issues led to the emergence of factions and strained the party's unity, impacting its stability and effectiveness.

The internal challenges within the Jubilee Party reshaped Kenya's political landscape, leading to new alliances and shifts in power dynamics. The party's struggles with discipline contributed to changes in public perception and political configurations, influencing the broader political narrative.

Formation of Azimio la Umoja Coalition: Azimio la Umoja was formed in 2022, bringing together various political parties to present a united front. The coalition aimed to consolidate support and harmonize policy agendas, emphasizing national unity. Its formation marked a significant development in Kenya's evolving political landscape. Party discipline was vital for Azimio la Umoja's cohesion and effectiveness, enabling a unified campaign and consistent policy messaging. Despite internal disagreements, disciplined leadership helped manage disputes and secure a strong parliamentary presence, contributing to its competitive stance in the elections.

4.2 Party Discipline in Kenyan Political Coalitions
4.2.1 Case Studies Showcasing Party Discipline Leading to Coalition Success

Party discipline was pivotal to the success of the Grand Coalition Government in Kenya, fostering unity and cohesion among its members, particularly under the leadership of key figures like President Mwai Kibaki and Prime Minister Raila Odinga. By ensuring collective decision-making and minimizing fragmentation, the coalition presented a united front that facilitated streamlined communication and effective governance. This discipline enabled smoother implementation of policies and helped manage internal conflicts, reinforcing the coalition's stability and strengthening its negotiating position with external stakeholders like Kofi Annan.

Additionally, strong party discipline instilled public confidence in the coalition, as it demonstrated stability and predictability during a tumultuous period. The inclusive governance approach, led by figures such as Deputy Prime Ministers Uhuru Kenyatta and Musalia Mudavadi, allowed for the representation of diverse interests while balancing power dynamics among coalition partners. Ultimately, this cohesion was essential for navigating the complexities of post-election recovery and implementing necessary reforms, contributing to the stabilization of the country.

4.2.2 Case Studies Illustrating Weak Party Discipline Leading to Fragmentation

*FORD's Fragmentation***:** The case of the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (FORD) in Kenya's political history provides a clear example of how weak party discipline can contribute to the fragmentation and disintegration of political coalitions. Despite its initial unity in challenging the single-party dominance of KANU, FORD lacked strong internal cohesion and discipline among its diverse factions led by leaders with distinct interests and ideologies. Internal disagreements over leadership positions, strategies, and conflicting personal ambitions led to power struggles and factionalism within the coalition (Khadiagala, 2010).

The inability to reconcile these differences and maintain a cohesive vision resulted in the splintering of FORD into various factions, such as FORD-Asili and FORD-Kenya, weakening its capacity to effectively challenge KANU's dominance. This case study illustrates how the lack of party discipline can undermine the strength and stability of political coalitions, diminishing their impact on the political landscape and electoral outcomes.

NARC's Decline Post-2002: The National Rainbow Coalition (NARC), formed to unite against the long-ruling KANU party, encountered internal discord after its 2002 election victory. Conflicts between the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the National Alliance Party of Kenya (NAK) over leadership positions and policy priorities, particularly during the 2005 constitutional debates, led to the erosion of NARC's unity and its eventual fragmentation.

Following NARC's disintegration, the Kenyan political landscape underwent significant realignments. Raila Odinga, previously part of the LDP faction, established the prominent opposition party, the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), attracting former NARC members. Meanwhile, President Mwai Kibaki and his supporters from the NAK faction formed the Party of National Unity (PNU) as a platform for his re-election bid in 2007. This proliferation of smaller political parties and new alliances underscored the extensive reconfiguration of Kenya's political landscape after the dissolution of NARC.

CORD's Challenges: The Coalition for Reforms and Democracy (CORD) experienced weakened party discipline due to internal disputes and divergent interests. Disagreements over leadership and strategies hindered its effectiveness, leading to its dissolution before the 2017 elections and the formation of NASA. During the oral interview, David Burare observed that:

> *"...the cumulative effect of internal disputes, leadership struggles, and differing political agendas within CORD led to the gradual disintegration of the coalition. The inability to address the internal rifts and the failure to maintain a cohesive stance resulted in the weakening of CORD's unity over time, ultimately leading to the coalition's diminished influence and eventual dissolution. The coalition dissolved in the period preceding the 2017 elections. This dissolution was a significant step in the formation of a new political entity known as the National Super Alliance (NASA)".* (O.I, David Burare, Upper Hill, Nairobi, 23rd November 2023)

This assertion is in agreement with Langat who posits that as the 2017 elections approached, CORD underwent a transformation, culminating in the creation of NASA (Langat, 2020).

Jubilee Alliance's Internal Strife Post-2017: The Jubilee Alliance, initially a robust coalition formed by merging TNA and URP, encountered significant challenges during President Kenyatta's second term (2017-2022). Internal tensions between factions loyal to Kenyatta and those aligned with his deputy, Ruto, strained the coalition's unity and party discipline. Disagreements over initiatives like the BBI and conflicting political ambitions led to fragmentation, with members defecting to other parties or forming new ones. The erosion of trust and internal conflicts weakened the coalition's credibility and governance effectiveness.

Despite the internal challenges and weakened party discipline, the Jubilee Alliance did not experience a complete collapse or dissolution post-2017 elections. The coalition managed to sustain itself and remain in power throughout its tenure, albeit with visible internal disagreements and strains. This showcased a level of resilience, as the alliance navigated the internal fractures and maintained its position, albeit with diminished internal cohesion.

NASA's Disintegration After 2017: Following the 2017 elections, NASA faced fragmentation due to power struggles among key leaders. Divergent interests and a lack of trust contributed to its disintegration, leading to defections and the formation of the One Kenya Alliance (OKA) by former NASA leaders. *Daily Nation* newspaper reported of key defections within NASA, on his campaigns while at Busia, Ruto urged Busia voters to back the re-election of President Kenyatta in the October 17th poll re-run. Deputy President William Ruto had returned to Busia County where he received former Funyula MP Paul Otuoma to the Jubilee team, as the party intensified campaigns in areas perceived to be NASA strongholds ahead of the October 17th repeat presidential poll.

> "*Nasa did not want me. Raila will realize that he made a mistake by deciding to take sides in the Busia governorship contest*," former Funyula MP Paul Otuoma said. (*Daily Nation*, September 19, 2017. p. 6).

Similarly, the former NASA co-principal said he would work for the re-election of President Kenyatta. The fifth National Super Alliance (NASA) principal, Isaac Ruto, had rejoined the Jubilee team, pledging to campaign for the re-election of President Uhuru Kenyatta in October. He alluded:

> "*Today I have returned to where I belong," the Chama Cha Mashinani (CCM) leader told the crowd, which included his successor Governor Joyce Laboso and Baringo Senator Gideon Moi. Another harsh Jubilee critic, Emurua Dikirr MP Johanna Ng'eno, also threw his support Behind the Uhuru team".* (Saturday Nation, September 9, 2017. p. 5.)

Groups offered to drum up support for the president's re-election in the October 17, 2017 poll. The meeting at State House Nairobi saw several politicians who had hitherto been in NASA defecting to the Jubilee party. They included former Vihiga governor Moses Akaranga, and Bungoma Gubernatorial candidate Alfred Khangati. Former presidential candidate Cyrus Jirongo was also in the group, as was former cabinet minister Chris Okemo who unsuccessfully vied for the Nambale parliamentary seat on a Labour Party Kenya ticket. Others in the meeting included former cabinet ministers Fred Gumo and Musikari Kombo, and former National Assembly speaker Kenneth Marende. The delegation was led by Water Cabinet Secretary Eugene Wamalwa and Senate Speaker Ken Lusaka. Meanwhile, in Nairobi, President Kenyatta's campaign got a shot in the arm from candidates who had lost in the elections.

After the disintegration of the National Super Alliance (NASA) following the 2017 elections, the Kenyan political landscape witnessed significant realignments. The emergence of the One Kenya Alliance (OKA), featuring former NASA leaders like Musalia Mudavadi, Kalonzo Musyoka, Gideon Moi, and Moses Wetangula, marked a shift

as they consolidated their influence under a new political alliance. Additionally, Raila Odinga's reconciliation with President Kenyatta, known as the "*handshake*," triggered internal divisions within NASA, with some leaders supporting Odinga's move, while others, like Mudavadi and Wetangula, criticized it, leading to further realignments. Parties like Wiper Democratic Movement and Chama Cha Mashinani also sought new partnerships, showcasing the reshuffling of political strategies in the post-NASA era.

Concerning the "*handshake*", Musalia Mudavadi observed:

"*…opposition is important. Those who think that if you are in opposition you are not patriotic are ignorant…in fact you are unpatriotic if you try and kill the opposition. As it is we can support an idea, but you do not have to troop to the government to support it. (Patrick Lang'at, "Mudavadi faults Raila, Kalonzo on supporting Uhuru agenda" Daily Nation*, August 8, 2018)

Furthermore, in what Mudavadi refused to discuss further, the ANC party, in its statement, described the Uhuru-Raila handshake as "non-inclusive." The party refuted:

"It is ironic that while the Building Bridges (handshake) nine-point proposal has inclusivity as one of the points of focus, the process itself is so far not inclusive. It is, therefore, a flawed process from the beginning, and its owners, especially President Kenyatta, must wake up to this glaring contradiction." The party called for the disbandment of the building bridges team, calling it "lame duck".

The disintegration of NASA led to the formation of the One Kenya Alliance (OKA) and prompted shifts in alliances and strategies among constituent parties. Internal divisions, the Odinga-Kenyatta reconciliation, and differing political aspirations prompted leaders to forge new alliances or reposition themselves politically, shaping a new landscape of political affiliations in Kenya.

Based on the findings of the study provided, the study demonstrates how weak party discipline has consistently contributed to coalition fragmentation or collapse in Kenya's political history. Internal conflicts, differing agendas, power struggles, and the absence of unified ideologies have consistently undermined the stability and effectiveness of coalitions, ultimately impacting their ability to govern cohesively and achieve common objectives.

V. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Conclusion

The study highlights the critical importance of party discipline for the effectiveness and sustainability of political coalitions in Kenya. The findings demonstrate how party discipline is a crucial factor in determining the coherence, unity, and effectiveness of political parties and coalitions. Strong party discipline is associated with coherent decision-making, effective policy implementation, and the ability to navigate complex political landscapes. Conversely, weak party discipline can lead to internal divisions, policy inconsistencies, and challenges in achieving collective goals. The study emphasizes that maintaining party discipline is essential for ensuring effective governance, stable coalition governments, cohesive decision-making, electoral success, democratic principles, accountability, and representation within Kenya's political landscape. Overall, the study underscores the significance of fostering a culture of discipline and adherence to party principles for the long-term success and resilience of political coalitions in Kenya.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the foregoing findings, the study recommends measures to enhance party discipline in Kenya. The study recommends to the political parties to establish clear internal regulations, inclusive decision-making processes, and strengthen structures. Coalition leaders should demonstrate strong leadership and foster unity, communication, and trust within coalitions. The study recommends to the public to support disciplined parties and demand transparency. Constitutional amendments, including provisions for intra-party democracy and anti-defection laws, are suggested to improve party discipline.

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