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THE ETHNIC HATE SPEECH WAS NETWORKED: WHAT POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS ON SOCIAL MEDIA REVEAL ABOUT THE 2013 GENERAL ELECTIONS IN KENYA

EL DISCURSO ÉTNICO DEL ODIO SE DIFUNDIÓ POR LAS REDES. ANÁLISIS DE LAS DISCUSIONES POLÍTICAS EN LAS REDES SOCIALES DURANTE LAS ELECCIONES GENERALES DE 2013 EN KENIA

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Abstract: This article examines if the increased political discussions on social media especially Twitter and Facebook before and after the March 4th, 2013 general elections in Kenya translated to a more robust alternative public sphere that broke the hegemony of the traditional media as agenda setters or an alternative space for the audience to vent out their frustrations and grievances about the election. In the last most contentious elections in 2007, in Kenya, both new and old media were blamed for fueling ethnic hate speech which culminated into the 2007/ 2008 post election violence. It is argued in this text that although voting patterns in the March 2013 elections were clearly along ethnic lines just like in 2007, there was no physical post election violence like was the case in 2008. What was clearly evident there was ethnic hate speech before and after the general elections on social media networks. We therefore observe that unlike in 2008 where ethnic violence was fought out in the streets, in the 2013 general elections, the ethnic war was networked. The article uses qualitative content analysis of some of the messages sent on Twitter and Facebook to argue that social media platforms only acted as alternative spaces for Kenyans to fight out their ethnic political wars and not alternative public spheres for constructive political deliberation. So it concludes by observing that social media networks in the 2013 general elections in Kenya acted as 'opium of the masses' only serving the function of keeping Kenya quiet and peaceful to prevent a repeat of the 2008 post election violence, but not alternative public spheres to facilitate constructive political deliberation.
Keywords: Ethnicity; Social Media; Elections; Kenya; Hate Speech.

Resumen: En este artículo se analiza si el aumento de las discusiones políticas sobre las redes sociales, especialmente Twitter y Facebook, antes y después de las

elecciones generales en Kenia del 04 de marzo de 2013, se tradujeron en una esfera pública alternativa sólida que rompiera con la hegemonía de los medios de comunicación tradicionales en tanto que fijadores de la agenda, o un espacio alternativo para la audiencia en el que tratar sus frustraciones y quejas sobre las elecciones. En las últimas elecciones más polémicas en Kenia, en 2007, tanto los nuevos medios como los tradicionales fueron acusados de alimentar la incitación al odio étnico, que culminó en la violencia sufrida a finales de 2007 y principios de 2008, después de las elecciones. El argumento de este texto señala que aunque los patrones de voto en las elecciones de marzo 2013 se delinearon claramente siguiendo un patrón étnico al igual que en 2007, no hubo violencia física postelectoral, como ocurrió en 2008. La incitación al odio étnico era ya evidente antes y después de las elecciones generales en las redes sociales. Por lo tanto, observamos que, a diferencia de 2008 donde la violencia étnica se libró en las calles, en las elecciones generales de 2013, esta violencia se canalizó a través de la red. El artículo utiliza el análisis de contenido cualitativo de algunos de los mensajes enviados a través de Twitter y Facebook para sostener que estas plataformas sólo sirvieron para los kenianos como espacios alternativos en los que escenificar su confrontación política étnica, y no como esferas públicas alternativas para la deliberación política constructiva. Por lo tanto, se concluye señalando que las redes sociales en las elecciones generales de 2013 en Kenia actuaron como "el opio del pueblo", que sólo sirvió para mantener Kenia tranquila y pacífica, con el fin de evitar que se repitiera la violencia post-electoral de 2008, pero no como esfera pública alternativa que facilitara la deliberación política constructiva. **Palabras clave:** Etnicidad; redes sociales; elecciones generales; Kenia; discurso del odio.

1. Introduction

Kenya holds elections after every five years since it got independence in 1963. The last general elections were held on March 4th, 2013 following the Implementation of a new constitution in August, 2010. One of the most notable general elections in Kenya's history is the 2007 general elections and the ensuing post election violence in which over 1.500 people lost their lives; another 300.000 were internally displaced from their homes and property worth millions of shillings was destroyed. Both new and traditional media were partly blamed for fuelling "tribal hate speech" during the electioneering period and immediately after the disputed presidential results were announced. The mainstream traditional media were especially blamed for being compromised by their political biases which were largely ethnic based hence could not act as critical and vigilant public watchdogs keen on monitoring, preventing or highlighting ethnicised labelling (Makokha, 2010; BBC World Trust policy Brief No. 1, 2008).

From a historical perspective, ethnicised politics in Kenya can be traced from Kenya's colonial past. Ethnicity significantly informed the formation of the first national political parties in Kenya which led to the country's independence in 1963 (Wanyama, 2010: 65). Leaders from the dominant ethnic groups, the Kikuyus and the Luos (these still are the biggest and 'worst' political adversaries) formed the first national political party, Kenya African National Union (KANU) in 1960. The smaller ethnic groups (among them the Kalenjins, the Kamba, the Luhya, Maasai and ethnic groups from the Coastal region) felt left out and came together to form the second national political party, the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU). Therefore although the main objective of these two parties was to defeat the colonisers, ethnic identities were at the core of these political organisations (Wanyama, 2010: 66). It can however be observed that what is new about "modern" ethnicised politics in Kenya is the means in which it is executed; through new media, especially social media with potentially significant reach and impact on the society as a whole.

After independence in 1963, the dominant party, KANU, partly coerced and partly persuaded KADU leaders to dissolve their party in the name of "national unity". The first President of Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta, started the trend of "political rewards" by appointing the former KADU leaders who cooperated to the cabinet, an enviable chance to have a taste of *Uhuru* (Kiswahili term for "Independence"). Those who refused to defect were denied these prestigious cabinet positions and their constituencies were marginalised (Oloo, 2010; Wanjama, 2010). Ethnicity has been regarded as a major factor in most African countries especially during elections. Ethnicity has shaped political discourse in Zimbabwe, Rwanda and Burundi, Uganda, Kenya, Cameroon and South Africa among others although this has not necessarily translated to political violence in most cases (Nyamnjoh, 2010; Maweu, 2012).

The culture of ethnicised politics and the allocation of state resources, especially public land has therefore been present in Kenya right from independence through to multipartysm in the 1990s up until now.

As Oloo (2010: 47) notes,

> "The distribution of both public resources and government positions has always been ethnic based. The ethnic groups controlling State House have systematically favoured their own communities. Kenyan governments have consequently taken part in ethnic politics, most likely through ethnically-based resource distribution and certainly through ethnically-inclined appointment policies. Public resource distribution is therefore viewed as a system of ethnic punishment and reward, and poli-

tics itself has, due to this government "bias" been diminished into a game of ethnic patronage".

The 2007/2008 post election violence in which over 1.500 people lost their lives, 300.000 were internally displaced from their homes and property worth millions of shillings was destroyed marked the darkest moment in the history of Kenya since Independence. Owing to "quiet and peace" before and after the march, 2013 elections, one can easily observe that indeed Kenyans learned from their mistakes in 2007/2008 post election violence. But that is only before checking out what was making rounds in the social media networks especially Twitter and Facebook. The March 2013 General Elections in Kenya took place following major reforms and massive society-wide efforts for the elections to be peaceful, transparent and credible. On the Election Day, there was a huge turnout and Kenyan voters demonstrated remarkable patience amidst several false starts. Generally, there prevailed a calm democratic spirit during the whole voting period. While there were several serious violent incidents which occurred in some parts of the country, overall the elections were regarded as a huge success (European Union Elections Observation Mission, 2013).

The March 2013 elections were phenomenal in Kenya's history in that they were the first real test of Kenya's new Constitution, implemented in August 2010, a new electoral framework –the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC), and a reformed Judiciary–. Kenyans were therefore highly optimistic and keen to exercise their civic and democratic voting rights under the new constitution, hence the exceptionally high voter turnout since independence. The elections were also an ambitious undertaking since it was the first time Kenyans were electing the president, the national assembly, women's representatives, the senate, governors and county assemblies in one day. This placed enormous responsibility and called for major endeavours on the part of the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC), Kenya's legal institutions, its political parties, civil society and other stakeholders, as well as dedication on the part of Kenya's electorate (European Union Elections Observation Mission, 2013).

The media were particularly active in advocating for a peaceful process. They offered extensive coverage of elections, held numerous talk shows with experts, organized the first Presidential debate ever since independence featuring all eight presidential candidates and made public information about contestants. But owing to what happened in 2007/2008 where the main stream media were blamed for fuelling the post election violence, it was also evident that the major broadcast media filtered potentially disagreeable messages that might not conform to their calls for calm, patience and peace (European Union Elections Observa-

tion Mission, 2013). The media particularly censured potentially acrimonious information on the Election Day, during vote count, which took one week (the longest in Kenya's history and during the run up to the Supreme Court Ruling after the main opposition political Party, CORD, went to court to challenge the validity of the elections. But as the main stream media censored itself to ensure peace and calm in the country, the country was 'burning' through the ethnic hate messages transmitted through social media.

The Networked ethnic hate speech did not go unnoticed by the National Cohesion and Integration Commission (NCIC), which was formed by the government to facilitate national healing after the 2007/2008 post election. The NCIC Vice Chairperson, Milly Lwanga, was quoted observing that "Hate speech on social media had actually subsided to a great extent in the period before the General Election. But then we noted that just immediately after the elections, when the results started coming in, particularly with the delayed tallying of the presidential results, hate was rising to levels that were becoming uncontrollable" (Capital News, March 18, 2013). Under Article 13 of the National Cohesion and Integration Act of 2008, a person who uses speech (including words, programs, images or plays) that is "threatening, abusive or insulting or involves the use of threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour commits an offence if such person intends thereby to stir up ethnic hatred, or having regard to all the circumstances, ethnic hatred is likely to be stirred up." But though the government managed to close down some online forums such as Mashujaa.com, nothing much could be done to curb the numerous hate speech doing rounds especially on Face Book on both private and group pages.

2. Networking ethnic war through Twitter and Facebook

Proponents of the democratizing power of social media (Jeong-su, 2003; Papacharissi, 2002, 2004; Woo-Young, 2005), profess the social media's capacity to empower ordinary people to beat "big media" in the agenda setting scene. Such enthusiasts argue that new media in general and social media in particular will increase political participation and pave the way for a new democratic utopia. The successful use of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace and YouTube in mobilizing political support in developed democracies such as the US by Barrack Obama in 2008 and 2012 and David Cameron in the UK in 2010 as well as the political uprising in the Arab world popularly known as the Arab Spring in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya ignited and catalysed by social media among others has re-ignited debates about the power of new media in political mobilization. In particular, online media is seen as promoting communicative democracy by recovering the right of public debate for social groups

that have been deprived of access to the existing media. These new media are characterized by "post-capitalization, the expansion of access rights, and interactive communication" (Yim Jeong-su 2003: 40). It is further argued that the alternative forums created by such new media vitalize public opinion creation by bottom-up agenda setting. Such media therefore play a major role in producing and disseminating debates that challenge the dominant social order and work to create new space that offers opportunities for political participation. In the new network society of instant messaging, blogging and social networking, politics has become fundamentally media politics.

Although it is without doubt that new media technologies provide the citizens with new tools to facilitate participation in social and political matters, it is important to critically analyze the question of whether new media does offer a new public sphere different from that provided by the old media hence enhancing democracy or merely new public spaces where alternative discourse takes place. The advent of multiparty politics in Kenya in the 1990s brought with it the liberalisation of airwaves and the proliferation of the media in Kenya. Multipartysm was anticipated to bring in the politics of ideology, which would replace ethnic based politics just the same way the proliferation of media was anticipated to expand democratic space. The media in Kenya was in the forefront in the fight for multiparty democracy in the early 1990s and this fight persisted until private media was free from direct government control.

There has however been a consistent pattern of visible ethnic-based politics in subsequent elections in Kenya since the advent of liberalized media and multiparty politics in 1992. Multiparty politics seems to have done nothing to change Kenyans' perception that political patronage would follow ethnic lines and therefore ethnic voting was evident in the 2005 referendum on the draft constitution, the 2007 general elections (Oloo, 2010) as well as the 2013 elections. Although new media, especially social media can easily be regarded as the alternative media through which citizens can dilute this ethnicised pattern of politics, an analysis of the content in social media shows that it is much more ethnicised than in old media where we have some basic regulatory standards.

3. How ethnic hate speech was networked through Twitter and Facebook in the March 2013 elections in Kenya

Since the 2007/8 Post Election Violence in which Hate speech mainly through Short Text Messages via mobile phones was said to have played a major role, ethnic hate speech has garnered growing interest in Kenya. Electoral process in Kenya is by and large determined by affiliation to the "right" party; which is naturally the party led by one of the ethnic community's own members (Oloo,

2010). This is so critical to the extent that even the most popular politician will have difficulty being elected if he/she stands on the ticket of a party associated with and led by another ethnic community. The ultimate goal of general elections in Kenya can arguably be said to be either to capture the presidency for the ethnic group from which the president hails or belong to a party that is in the "good books" of the President's party, so that you can be closer to the "eating table" (Oloo, 2010). Political representation in Kenyan politics is thus defined by the community not the individual. Political parties tend to form on the bedrock of an ethnic base hence the key political heavy weights are acknowledged leaders of their ethnic groups. Voters are therefore asked to choose among contenders for office from their own ethnic group.

Ethnicity (tribalism) has been argued as playing the biggest part in the success of one's political career in Kenya (Oloo, 2010). Both political leaders and the masses view the presidency not as a national symbol, but a tribal office, which allows members of the president's tribe to "eat"[1]. Unlike in the advanced democracies, politics in Kenya is "life-giving", that is, politics intrudes deeply into the lives of people (Steeves, 2006). Holding political office largely determines whether one gets access to land, to credit and other key resources hence the contestation for power, to have a position at the commanding heights of the political system, is an intense and continuous struggle (Steeves, 2006). An individual politician in Kenya is defined by one's ethnic community and therefore one's loyalty and actions are framed within an ethnic identity.

In the March 2013 general elections, we had two major political camps in Kenya; The Jubilee Alliance led by the current president Uhuru Kenyatta who is from the Kikuyu ethnic community and his deputy Wiliam Ruto, who is from the Kalenjin ethnic community. The other camp CORD, was led by the former Prime Minister, Raila Odinga, who is from the Luo ethnic community and Kalonzo Musyoka, who is from the Kamba ethnic community. Most voters were therefore either Jubilee supporters or CORD supporters depending on which side 'your person' was. As the vote count illustrated, the Jubilee Alliance got overwhelming support from the Kikuyu and Kalenjin communities whereas CORD got overwhelming support from the Luo, Kamba, Luhya and ethnic communities from the Coastal region in line with the leading political (read tribal) chiefs from these communities. Therefore the ethnic hate messages were mainly

[01] The ethnic elites from the president's ethnic group are assured of plum jobs in high public positions from which huge kickbacks are drawn and lucrative government contracts are won. Although the masses from the president's ethnic group do not enjoy these direct benefits, they nevertheless vote for one of their own (Jonyo, 2003; Wanyande, 2006).

between Jubilee and CORD supporters and centred on calling for the discrimination or harming of members of a particular tribe, stereotypes associated with the different tribes and name calling of the lead politicians from a particular tribe especially Raila of CORD and Kenyatta of Jubilee.

4. Methodology

To achieve the stated study objective of establishing how ethnic war was networked in the 2013 general elections in Kenya, it was implemented a qualitative content analysis of some of the hate messages exchanged online during the electioneering period. Qualitative content analysis consists the use of known literature to contextualise readings of texts, re-articulating the meanings of texts in view of assumed contexts as well as the search of multiple interpretations of texts by considering a diversity of voices; alternative, dominant, oppositional (Krippendorf, 2004). Qualitative researchers make use of "weaving quotes from the analysed texts and literature about the contexts of these texts into their conclusions, by constructing parallelisms, by engaging in triangulations, and by elaborating on any metaphors they can identify" (Krippendorf, 2004: 88).

A purposive sample of 30 hate messages exchanged between January 2013 and May 2013 was chosen for the analysis based on two of the categories used by Umati to monitor hate speech: *offensive speech* and *extremely dangerous speech*. The research sampled 15 messages for each category. The researcher purposively sought messages that were extremely inciting either because they either used derogatory remarks, explicitly called members of one community to kill members of another community, explicitly called for one community to forcibly evict members of another community from their land as well as those that were offensive in that they were intended to insult a particular group through stereotypes or sheer abuses. The messages were therefore analysed under the two themes/ categories: offensive speech and extremely dangerous speech. The main aim was to examine how citizens used new media (tweeter and Facebook) to fight out their ethnic wars online unlike in 2007/2008 post election violence where the war was physically on the streets.

4. 1. Procedures

For analysis, all the sampled messages were categorized as "ethnic comments meant to insult a particular group" and "extremely Inciting/Inflammatory speech" that had the highest potential to incite violence owing to their similarity in what was circulated mainly through mobile phones Short Text Messages in 2007/2008. According to a report released in May 2013 by Umati, an online monitoring firm that documented some of the hate messages circulated; there was a dramatic rise

in online offensive speeches circulated mainly through Facebook between the month of March 2013 (the election month) and February 2013, the month prior to the elections. In February 2013 there were 197 extremely inflammatory speeches which rose to 321 in March and general offensive messages rose from 122 in February to 405 in March (Umati Report, 2013).

Hate speech is variously defined in law, but in this work it is generally understood to mean speech that denigrates people on the basis of their membership in a group, such as an ethnic or religious group (Benesch, 2011). Benesch argues that speech can harm directly or indirectly, or both. It may directly offend, denigrate, humiliate or frighten the people it purports to describe. Speech can also bring about harm indirectly and with equal or even greater brutality by motivating others to think and act against members of the group in question like was the case in Kenya in 2007/ 2008. When an act of speech has a reasonable chance of catalyzing or amplifying violence by one group against another, given the circumstances in which it was made or disseminated, it is dangerous speech (Benesch, 2011).

Although stereotyping across tribes in Kenya is usually largely perceived as harmless, when compounded with derogatory remarks and use of animal names such as cockroaches, madoadoa (spots), weed, vultures, hyenas, dog it is likely to cause ethnic tension. Although extremely inflammatory speech may not by itself cause physical violence, like was the case in March 2013 elections, it has the capacity to promote or inflame violence when people are heavily influenced by such speech.

5. Results

5. 1. Analysis of extremely inciting messages

Extremely inciting speech is speech that may catalyze mass violence by influencing and inciting the audience to rise against the other community in a violent way. Inflammatory/Inciting speech focuses on the effect on the audience and not the state of mind of the speaker (Umati Report, 2013) and it has the highest potential to catalyse violence. For analysis, the verbatim hate messages are in bold letter and our explanations are in brackets.

1.– "Jaluo zote ziko bonde la ufa. Zitoke polepole. Coz lazima mtahiri na mabati ata mkose kuanza fujo. Iyo ni kitu imepangwa vizuri. All Luos in the rift valley you better start moving out of there because you will be forcefully circumcised using iron sheets even if you don't cause chaos. This is something that has been well planned."

(The above message which was originally send in a mix of Kiswahili and English calls for the circumcising of Luo men who live in the Rift valley, which

is a cosmopolitan region with members from different ethnic communities. Traditionally the Luo community does not circumcise their males. It is important to note that the Rift Valley part of Kenya, which is also the most productive (the country's bread basket) has been the worst hit in previous post election clashes and therefore such a message was likely to spark grave memories of past victims some of whom are still living in Camps as Internally Displaced Persons).

2.–"Bcoz Kikuyus are thieves the response of a thief is fire...bcoz u always like to live on hard way this opinion poll=violence..... NO RAILA NO RAIS."

(Send by a CORD supporter. Kikuyus and Luos have been the worst political enemies since Independence. Luos have always accused the Kikuyus of 'cheating and stealing their Presidency. The author of the message threatens that if Raila does not become president then there will be chaos- there will be no president- 'NO RAILA NO RAIS'. 'RAIS' is a Swahili word for president).

3.–"I urge all my tribesmen to figt, anihilate, assasinate and execute, when the opportunity will present itself, all those who benefied in this squables. REVENGE!!REVENGE!!REVENGE!!"

(This message explicitly calls for physical violence. In 2007, when such messages were circulated through SMS, members of one community would go out in the streets and actually kill members of the other community).

4.–Wakatwe vichwa hawa wabara chinja hao washenzi kabisa ("Behead all of them,non coastal residents,butcher them they are all fools).

(This was circulated by members in the Coast Region which was largely Pro- CORD and prior to the elections they had called for cession from the Kenya because of historical land injustices meted on them since independence. One of the main contentious issues in the 2013 elections as in any other election in Kenya was land and Uhuru Kenyatta was on the spotlight for his family owning large tracts of land in the Coastal region).

5.–"Wakikuyu wahame nyanza and their businesses should be grounded to ashes."(Kikuyus should start moving from Nyanza and their businesses should be grounded to ashes)

Wajaluo tukishidwa i know we must ngoa reli, rusha mawe, choma maduka ya kununua maziwa, kuchoma tyre bararabara" Turushe mawe kabisaa hadi mungu wetu Raila, Angwambo aje atwambie tuache. Sisi ni Sirkal!" "kwani twangojani?si tuanze fujo?Mimi ni mwanamke bt kazi ntakayoifanya mtapenda;;;i hate Kenyanz;;;i hate …(land grabbers)".

(This was an explicit call to loot, engage in unlawful behaviour by members of the Luo community against Kikuyus. Generally Luos are stereotyped to be unruly and violent especially during elections and that is what the writer is implying in Kiswahili).

6.–"We,the Free Kenya Army ve declared war. We'll kill all kikuyus. Lets C hw u can rule us dead.Uhuru brought this to his pple.".

(This is a explicit call for violence to members of the Kikuyu ethnic community).

7.– Kikuyus preparing to slaughter Kalenjins in ELDORET despite them being in the same coalition. This is happening in Eldoret now."

(In 2007/2008, the worst hit town by the post election violence was Eldoret. Kalenjins, who claim to be the indigenous inhabitants of the Rift Valley, where Eldoret is located accuse the Kkiuyus of invading their land. And therefore this was a highly inciting message that was likely flare tempers).

8.– "I smell some KIKUYU'S stinking up the media waves. Those FUCKING KIKUYU sons of bitches. I wish I could find & KILL ONE!"

9.– I do support Maina Kamanda who says CORD leader better be hanged for Kenya to hav peace".

(An explicit call for the execution of Raila Odinga, the CORD leader. The author says he/she supports the call by a prominent politician from the Kikuyu ethnic community: Maina Kamanda).

From the analysis it was evident that immediately after the elections on March 4th, there was an increase in extremely inciting messages targeted at three main tribes (Kikuyus, from which the current president, Uhuru Kenyatta hails; Kalenjin, from which the Deputy President William Ruto hails; and Luo from which Raila Odinga, the main loser comes from) as well as supporters of the two main political parties (Jubilee supporters and CORD supporters). It was also evident that most of the inciting speech online was as a response to events happening on the ground as reported by the mainstream media. The highly inciting speech ranged from extremely vulgar language directed to members of a particular tribe, to calling members of one tribe to kill the other to advocating for eviction of a particular tribe from their land. The pattern of hate speech circulated in 2013 was very similar in tone to that circulated in 2007/2008 though this didn't culminate to physical violence, but very fierce soft ethnic war online. There were several Social Media pages such as 'Not another Kikuyu President' and 'STOP Raila NOW' where supporters of either presidential candidate traded insults and offensive remarks.

5. 2. Analysis of ethnic comments meant to insult a particular group

Comments in this category are mostly intended to insult a particular group through stereotypes or sheer abuses. The speaker does not generally call upon the audience to do anything harmful against the targeted group and hence state-

ments in this category have very little potential to cause physical violence. The following comments fall under this category:

1.–Wajaluo(Luos) na nyef nyef zao....waanze kuhama... Jaluos wil neva rule kenya! smely fish"

(Targeted at members of the Luo Ethnic community, who are known to be fish lovers).

2.–"This Kikuyu men who are always getting kichapo (beating) from women wanatuambia nini (what can they tell us?). Thank God am able to befriend Wajaluo and we are in agreement tht Kikuyus a common enemy" "The biggest insecurity in kenya is caused by the kikuyus forget the alshabaab."

(This message send by one who belongs to neither the Kikuyu nor the Luo community ridicules the men from the Kikuyu community for being battered by their wives. The author also comments that Kikuyus, whose stereotype is 'thieves and conmen' are a worse threat to security in Kenya than the Alshabab. The author who seems to be a 'Luo sympathizer' portrays the Kikuyus as a nuisance).

3.–Havent you realized thiz guyz (Luos) spend more than they can make and they keep borrowing ndo maana wanataka kutupeleka (that is why they want to take us) on the west.uko tulitoka,bye rao (We moved from there Bye Raila).

(The author insinuates that Luos are responsible for the tribulations of the president Uhuru Kenyatta and his deputy William Ruto for the charges they are facing against Humanity at the Hague. That was one of the allegations being peddled around during the election campaigns).

4.–Hamjambo wazalendo, huu ni wakati mwafaka wa kuajisha mwenye kuelekea jikoni ya kupiga samaki na mandazi kazi. Aliomba kazi na si tumpatie? UHURUTOSHA!(How are you Patriots, this is the perfect tim to prepare the one whoi is going to be cooking fish and Mandazi job. He asked for that job we should give him, Uhuru for President).

(This is a ridicule directed to Raila Odinga; that he should prepare to go home to 'cook fish'. Luos are known to love eating fish and their main economic activity is fishing).

5.–kikuyus why is it that ur minds revolves around luo's uncircum's dicks, yet ur cicum's dicks r so weak that u let dogs to fuck ur women 4r u. Shame on u wth ur small dicks kama peremende!.

(This is derogatory comment that has sexual innuendo. Luo community does not circumcise their males and the kikuyus always ridicule them for being still 'boys'. So the author here is insulting the Kikuyus by questioning the sexual

prowess of their circumcised genitals which do not seem to sexually satisfy the Kikuyu women).

6.–Kumbe wameru wako na akili ndogo ivi. Funda kabisa. Hasira mingi na kukula miraa kama mambuzi ndio kazi.Meru's u r idiots. Kufienimbali na izo kura zenu za Tharaka Nithi. Kubaff! ("So meru's have small brains like that,donkeys!They are quick to get mad and all they know is chewing khat like goats.Meru's are idiots.you people should just die!").

(The members of the Meru Ethnic community were supporting Kikuyus and therefore the author insults them for that insinuating that they are only good at chewing Miraa. The Miraa (Khat) plant is the main source of income for meru residents).

7.–"While we believe in democracy and freedom of choice for Kenyans, may I take this opportunity to WARN Kenyans that BADCHOICES like Raila may LEAD to serious and IRREVERSIBLE consequences".

(This was an explicit 'warning' by a non-Raila supporter that electing Raila would be disastrous to Kenya. Such a message has the potential of igniting a bitter exchange between the Pro-Raila supporters and their opponents. The message can also be said to be meant to paint Raila, the politician in a negative light in an attempt to minimize his chances of winning the elections).

6. Conclusions

From the analysis, it appears that online hate speech could be a reflection of the conversations Kenyans engage in offline, and thus offer a way to understand recurring issues that need to be taken into account if hate speech and ethnicised politics is to be addressed in Kenya in future elections. The alternative spaces provided by social media offered opportunities for the free exchange of opinions among citizens, and thus played a role in demolishing the existing closed structure of discussion and expanding the now open system of discourse. But as is evident from the above analysis, the same spaces can be effectively used to undermine constructive dialogue and to undermine peace through spreading hate speech. As observed earlier, the main stream media were highly cautious in what they reported to avoid a repeat of 2007/2008 post election violence and therefore the social media forums provided spaces for citizens to vent out their bottled emotions. The alternative public spaces can therefore be said to have facilitated counter-discourse that was produced and consumed by counter-publics, who had their expression or voices suppressed by the existing social order, as they interacted among themselves (Woo-Young, 2005). But this did not necessarily translate to constructive dialogue as is evident from the messages above.

It can also be observed that the main purpose of online political forums in the March 2013 general elections was to offer a platform to showcase personal expression. The online communication seems to have been primarily one way, and participants perused the views of others primarily to learn where they stand on the issues and, if necessary, rebut them. And in the process, the participants engaged in what Alonzo and Aiken (2004: 205) define as Flaming: "hostile intentions characterized by words of profanity, obscenity, and insults that inflict harm to a person or an organization resulting from uninhibited behavior". As is evident from the messages above, there was rampant flaming among social media users after and before the March elections. It can therefore be observed that social media networks in the 2013 general elections in Kenya acted as "opium of the masses" only serving the function of keeping Kenya "quiet and peaceful" to prevent a repeat of the 2008 post election violence, but not alternative public spheres to facilitate constructive political deliberation. It is evident that the soft ethnic war online in 2013 was just as vile as the physical ethnic war witnessed in the 2007/2008 post election violence.

Therefore in as much as we cannot overlook the positive democratic gains that both the old and new media has brought especially in emerging democracies in Africa like Kenya by minimizing chances of election rigging, opening up democratic space, and providing a new form of public sphere, we cannot, on the same note, ignore the glaring fact that new media, especially social media (Twitter and Facebook) is being used to amplify political "ghosts", in the form of ethnic hate speech. As is evident from the analysis of the Twitter and Facebook messages above, most of the political discussions on social media platforms were largely centered on the tribal political chiefs and the political content in the "old" media. This therefore resulted to "new public spaces", "old ethnic politics" shaped by the minority political class. We therefore argue that while social networks maybe effective at increasing political participation, such participation may not necessarily translate into political empowerment that is key to the success of any democracy.

7. References

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