



## *Political Violence in Kenya*

Examining a key puzzle in the study of electoral violence, this study asks how elites organize violence and why ordinary citizens participate. While existing theories of electoral violence emphasize weak institutions, ethnic cleavages, and the strategic use of violence, few specify how the political incentives of elites interact with the interests of ordinary citizens. Providing a new theory of electoral violence, Kathleen Klaus analyzes violence as a process of mobilization that requires coordination between elites and ordinary citizens. Drawing on fifteen months of fieldwork in Kenya, including hundreds of interviews and an original survey, *Political Violence in Kenya* argues that where land shapes livelihood and identity, and tenure institutions are weak, land, and narratives around land, serve as a key device around which elites and citizens coordinate the use of violence. By examining local-level variation during Kenya's 2007–2008 postelection violence, Klaus demonstrates how land struggles structure the dynamics of contentious politics and violence.

KATHLEEN KLAUS is Assistant Professor of Politics at the University of San Francisco where she specializes in African politics, political violence, land rights, and forced migration. Her dissertation won the APSA Best Field Work Award in 2016. She has received research funding from the Social Science Research Council, Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation, the United States Institute for Peace, and the National Science Foundation, among others.

# Political Violence in Kenya

Land, Elections, and Claim-Making

KATHLEEN KLAUS  
*University of San Francisco*



CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press  
 978-1-108-72646-7 — Political Violence in Kenya  
 Kathleen Klaus  
 Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

## CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom  
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA  
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
 314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi - 110025, India  
 103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781108726467](http://www.cambridge.org/9781108726467)

DOI: 10.1017/9781108764063

© Kathleen Klaus 2020

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2020

First paperback edition 2022

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data*

Names: Klaus, Kathleen F., 1985– author.

Title: Political violence in Kenya : land, elections, and claim-making / Kathleen F. Klaus.

Description: Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2020. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2019052354 (print) | LCCN 2019052355 (ebook) | ISBN 9781108488501 (hardback) | ISBN 9781108764063 (ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Political violence – Kenya. | Land tenure – Political aspects – Kenya. | Elections – Corrupt practices – Kenya. | Ethnic conflict – Kenya.

Classification: LCC HN793.Z9 V5575 2020 (print) | LCC HN793.Z9 (ebook) | DDC 303.6096762–dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2019052354>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2019052355>

ISBN 978-1-108-48850-1 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-108-72646-7 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press  
978-1-108-72646-7 — Political Violence in Kenya  
Kathleen Klaus  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)

---

*For Jeffrey*

Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>page viii</i>
<i>List of Maps</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>List of Tables</i>	<i>x</i>
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>xii</i>
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	<i>xvi</i>
1 Introduction	1
2 A Theory of Land and Electoral Violence	34
3 Historical Origins of Electoral Violence	70
<b>Part I Determinants of Contentious Land Narratives</b>	
4 Land Inequality and Land Narratives: Theory and Evidence	107
5 Narrative Formation in the Central Rift Valley	140
<b>Part II Determinants of Election Violence</b>	
6 Contentious Land Narratives and the Escalation of Violence	173
7 A Puzzle of Nonescalation? Contentious Land Narratives and Stability on Kenya’s Coast	212
<b>Part III Consequences of Electoral Violence</b>	
8 Individual-level Causes and Effects of Election Violence	245
9 Conclusion	282
<i>Appendix</i>	<i>298</i>
<i>References</i>	<i>320</i>
<i>Index</i>	<i>346</i>

## Figures

1.1 Election-related fatalities (1992–2017)	<i>page</i> 13
2.1 The process of election violence: summary view	36
2.2 The process of election violence: detailed view	45
2.3 Land narratives, logic of violence, and form of violence	53
3.1 Total number of households settled on settlements schemes during first three postcolonial regimes: Kenyatta (1962–1978), Moi (1978–2002), and Kibaki (2002–2012)	87
3.2 Annual allocations of settlement scheme land by province	89
3.3 Total number of households allocated on settlement scheme land annually in the Rift Valley Province (1962–2012)	97
4.1 Mean agreement with contentious land narratives (by county)	112
4.2 Land rights inequality between Kikuyu and Kalenjin residents in Nakuru County	115
5.1 Land acquisition and narrative formation	146
7.1 Land patronage, group size, and potential for violence	220
8.1 Exposure to divisive political appeals: electoral wards in Nakuru and Uasin Gishu counties	250
8.2 Relationship between vote margin, divisive political appeals, and electoral violence	258
8.3 Relationship between ethnic fractionalization index (ELF), divisive political appeals, and election violence	259
8.4 Exposure to election violence, attitudes toward ethnic outgroups, and political trust	270

*Maps*

1.1 County-level election violence: 2007–2008	<i>page</i> 4
2.4 Fieldwork sites	61

# Tables

2.1	Summary of research design	<i>page</i> 64
2.2	Summary of case studies	67
4.1	Qualitative case comparisons	118
5.1	Summary of paired-case design	143
5.2	Relational land security	148
6.1	Correlation between land narratives and the escalation of electoral violence (2007–2008)	178
6.2	Relationship between land narrative, logic of violence, and method of violence	182
7.1	County-level variation in intensity of election violence	214
7.2	Exposure to appeal: “If you kick out the other tribe, you will get their land”	216
7.3	Preferred strategy of claiming land rights	229
8.1	Frequency of land-related political appeals, by region and ethnic identity	249
8.2	Summary statistics: part I and II	254
8.3	Predictors of indirect exposure to election violence	257
8.4	Respondents who are not comfortable with “any Kenyan coming to live in this community”	267
8.5	Respondents who trust political leader, by county	268
8.6	Effects of violence exposure on openness to ethnic outsiders	272
8.7	Effects of violence on fear of intergroup boundary	275
8.8	Effects of violence exposure on trust in political leaders	276
8.9	Effects of violence exposure on interethnic engagement	278
9.1	Comparative case analysis	286
A.1	List of individual interviews	304
A.2	Focus group discussions	305
B.1	Key independent and dependent variables	307
B.2	Control variables	309



<i>List of Tables</i>	xi
B.3 Other important variables (mentioned in various chapters)	310
B.4 Home language of respondents	311
B.5 Location-level ELF index with predicted probabilities of direct exposure to violence	312
B.6 Pairwise correlation matrix: land narratives and violence	313
C.1 Alternative measures of political competition	315
C.2 Predictors of election violence (dependent variable: direct violence)	316
D.1 Reported fatalities	317
D.2 Coding scheme for levels of election violence	318
E.1 Allocation of settlement schemes: temporal and provincial view	319

## *Acknowledgments*

In December of 2007, I was living in southern Malawi on a Fulbright fellowship. I was conducting interviews with land poor Malawians, trying to understand why – years after the end of authoritarian rule – people were not demanding land reform. One evening, while listening to the BBC crackle through my radio, a headline caught my attention. Election violence had broken out in Kenya. The expatriate community in Malawi complained of having to cancel their holiday safaris. Meanwhile, journalists spoke of “tribal clashes,” shuttered businesses, and chaos in the streets. Despite the stream of crisis reporting that regularly emanated from the BBC, this particular story stuck out. Election violence was not supposed to happen in Kenya, not in 2007 anyhow. But something else caught my attention as well: the media’s emphasis on the tribal and atavistic roots of the crisis. I reflected on my research in Malawi: the centrality of land in people’s everyday lives and local politics. I knew little about Kenya at the time. But I did know that like Malawi, tea and coffee estates covered some of the most productive land. And like Malawi, I knew that land mattered to most Kenyans. And later, I’d learn just how much it mattered. At the time however, I knew only that the stories I heard about Kenya’s election violence were far too simple. Land, I guessed, had something to do with it too.

This was the question I would ask, in different ways and over the next many years, while a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. My undergraduate mentors from Smith College – Cathy and David Newbury, and Greg White – helped me think through difficult questions about politics and history in Africa, navigate the challenges of fieldwork, and land at the University of Wisconsin. I am grateful for their time and their unyielding encouragement.

At Wisconsin, my dissertation advisor, Scott Straus, pushed me to think about land – and to keep thinking about land – from my earliest

## *Acknowledgments*

xiii

days of graduate school. Scott, along with Michael Schatzberg and Aili Tripp, created a vibrant intellectual environment to learn and converse about the study of African politics. I also owe thanks to my other committee members: David Weimer, who worked patiently with me to analyze my survey results, and Erica Simmons, who pushed me on my concept of land narratives.

Other faculty at UW-Madison provided feedback at various stages of the book project, including Nadav Shelef, Noam Lupu, Jonathan Renshon, Aseema Sinha, and Jim Delehanty. And while Howard Schweber never commented directly on my work, he officiated my marriage on an island in Vermont, so that has to count for something. Thanks also to my many graduate school companions: Brandon Kendhammer, Alice Kang, Jen Petersen, Jeremy Menchik, Charlie Taylor, Taylor Price, Barry Driscoll, Mehreen Zahra-Malik, Galina Belokurova, Kyle Marquardt, Emily Sellars, Inken von Borzyskowski, Nick Barnes, and Marie-Ange Bunga. The experience was richer with all of you.

My deepest gratitude goes to my research assistants, respondents, and colleagues in Kenya, all of whom made this book possible. The Institute for Development Studies at the University of Nairobi served as my official host. At the University of Nairobi, I benefited from the time and insights of Winnie Mitullah and Karuti Kanyinga. My survey would not have been possible without the expertise and generosity of Abel Oyuke and Sam Balongo. Thanks also to Ambreena Manji, David Anderson, and Fibian Lukalo for their insights and expertise on land issues in Kenya. I benefited from a fabulous team of enumerators, including May Koko, Caroline Magani, Peter Kimani, Kevin Rotich, Nelson Ngige, Benjamin Ayega Anyona, Alice Mbuvi, and Kriss Cheupe. When conducting qualitative interviews across Nakuru County, I was lucky to have Jeff Osemo, Martin Munene, James Cherono, and Dominic Gicheru by my side. Research in Mauche would not have been possible without the kindness of Philip Rotich. Eunice Adhiambo Odhiambo made research in Kwale both possible and enjoyable. My greatest thanks go to my research assistants from Kilifi County: Rebecca Munga and Goodluck Mbagi. I thank them for sharing their time, stories, friendship, and a bit of their life with me. I've learned so much from both of them and I look forward to our next adventure. I also thank Njeri Kangethe for being my "Kenyan mom." She made sure I was safe and sound and, of course, well fed. It was also

during my fieldwork that I met Mai Hassan. Since our first chance encounter in Nakuru, I've enjoyed and benefited from our many conversations about land and politics in Kenya. Thanks for being a sounding board, Nairobi roommate, running partner, friend, and collaborator.

The Social Science Research Council and the National Science Foundation provided generous funding for my fieldwork in Kenya, while the United States Institute of Peace, the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation, and the Strauss Center for International Law and Security at UT-Austin supported the completion of the dissertation.

I've benefited from the support of many scholarly communities. While finishing my dissertation at the Strauss Center for International Law and Security at UT-Austin, Steven Brooke and Andrew Boutton were great writing partners, while Jason Brownlee offered valuable mentorship. Bruce Carruthers and the Buffett Institute for Global Studies at Northwestern University provided me with the time and space to revise my book, start new projects, meet new people, and learn from a fantastic group of scholars. Rachel Riedl was a wonderful mentor, always willing to meet for coffee, go for a run, or advise on a job talk. Rachel, along with Michael Albertus, Leo Arriola, Ana Arjona, and Robert Braun, participated in my book workshop, hosted by the Buffett Institute and the Program for African Studies, at Northwestern University. Their thoughtful and incisive feedback improved this book greatly. I am very grateful for their time. My fellow postdocs at Northwestern – Maria Akchurin, Nermeen Mouftah, Martha Wilfahrt, Basak Taraktas, Erin Moore, and Sinan Erensu – provided friendship and community. I owe Martha Wilfahrt special thanks for the many drafts she's edited.

Many others have provided feedback and support during the writing of the book, including Cathy Boone, Nic Cheeseman, Sebastian Elischer, Susanne Mueller, Shelby Grossman, Anne Meng, and Alex Dyzenhaus. During the American Political Science Association Africa Workshop in Nairobi, I had great conversations with Beth Whitaker and Aditi Malik, along with the other participants. Thanks also to Yoni Morse, for his hospitality during the Connecticut winter. Brian Ekdale and Melissa Tully have been great hosts in Nairobi and Iowa City. Kim Yi Dionne invited me to writing retreats in the Northampton woods and helped me share my work with a larger public. It's been a pleasure

*Acknowledgments*

xv

working with both Matthew Mitchell and Jeremy Horowitz on articles related to this book.

Since moving to San Francisco, I've enjoyed participating in the Africa Research Workshop at University of California, Berkeley. I thank Leo Arriola for organizing these gatherings and including me. Workshop participants, including Fiona Shen Bayh, Danny Choi, Justine Davis, and Paul Thissen, provided excellent feedback and engagement. At the University of San Francisco, Jessica Blum and Omar Miranda have been great friends and writing partners. Annick Wibben, Dana Zartner, Kathy Coll, and Sadia Saeed have also provided support. In addition to helping design the figures in this book, Noopur Agarwal is a great friend, providing constant encouragement during the final months of revisions.

My parents, Ellen, Marshall, and my aunt, Moira, have cheered me on at every step of writing this book. My mom showed me the world from an early age and what it takes to survive and thrive as a woman in academia. My dad helped me keep perspective. And my grandmother, who earned her PhD in the 1960s with three kids in tow, reminded me that the dissertation was the easy part. Maureen provided my home away from home while in graduate school.

Finally, thanks to Jeffrey for being my partner through it all – late nights at the library in Madison, *matatu* rides in Kakamega, evictions in Accra, helping me field a survey in Kenya, and moving me to Austin, Evanston, Middletown, and finally, out to San Francisco. Thanks for your patience, editorial eye, and most of all, ensuring that we live well and do good work.

## *Abbreviations*

ADC	Agricultural Development Corporation
CIPEV	Commission of Inquiry into Post-Election Violence
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ECK	Electoral Commission of Kenya
GEMA	Gikuyu, Embu, and Meru Association
ICC	International Criminal Court
IDP	Internally displaced persons
KADU	Kenya African Democratic Union
KANU	Kenya Africa National Union
KDF	Kenya Defense Forces
KICC	Kenyatta International Conference Centre
LBC	Land-buying company
LDSB	Land Development and Settlement Board
MAS	Million-Acre Settlement Scheme
NARC	National Rainbow Coalition
ODM	Orange Democratic Movement
PEV	Post-Election Violence
PNU	Party of National Unity
SS	Settlement scheme
TNA	The National Alliance Party
URP	United Republican Party