











A Political History of the southern Kikuyu of Kiambu, Murang'a and Thika

As told through their elected representatives, 1957-2022





Charles Hornsby July 2022

Series #10





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Limitations

Excludes Local Government throughout.

- 1 Gusii
- 2 Meru
- 3 Ukambani
- 4 Embu and Mbeere
- 5 Maasai and Samburu
- 6 Somali
- 7 Nakuru and Laikipia
- 8 Nairobi
- 9 Bukusu Luhya
- 10 Southern Kikuyu



Southern Kikuyu Political History

The Kikuyu (also Gikuyu or Agikuyu) are the largest Bantu-speaking people of Kenya, mostly living in the highland area of south-central Kenya, south and west of Mount Kenya, having migrated into the region around 400 years ago.

There was relatively little differentiation between the southern and northern Kikuyu at the dawn of colonial rule, but southern Kikuyu in Kiambu especially were the first to be integrated into the colonial economy via proximity to Nairobi, as well as colonial land alienations and the creation of the 'white highlands' to their north and west.

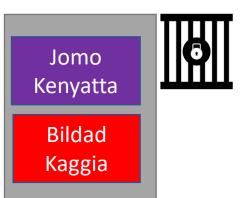
The struggles of the Kikuyu to rid themselves of colonial control, the Mau Mau war and the resulting agricultural and political settlement which transformed central Kenya's politics have bene well documented. As we open the story, Central Province remains under emergency (military) rule, the Mau Mau war is nearly over, but many detainees including their alleged ringleader Jomo Kenyatta (from Gatundu in Kiambu) remain in prison or exile.

Nairobi has already been covered, so the city – which was dominated by Kiambu and Murang'a politicians until the 1990s – is not included here.

In the rest of this analysis, all politicians listed are Kikuyu unless otherwise noted. If non-Kikuyu, they are coloured grey with a suffix i.e. '(Kal)' for Kalenjin.



Governor Renison

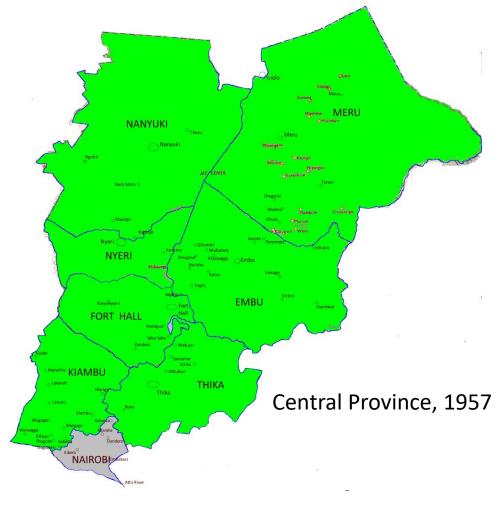




1957

Bernard Mate (M)

Central Province



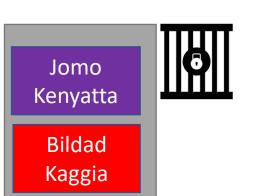
Colonial

Kenya

With one constituency for the entire expansive Central Province (covering both settler territories in Thika and Nanyuki and African "reserves") and most Kikuyu unable to meet the loyalty qualifications to vote, the first elected representative for the whole Kikuyu, Embu and Meru region was a Meru, Bernard Mate. Kenyatta, Bildad Kaggia (from Murang'a) and other detainees remained imprisoned.



Governor Renison



Southern Kikuyu Political History

1958



Central Province
South



Colonial

Kenya

With the addition of a new constituency (for Kiambu, Thika and Fort Hall), southern Central Province has its own first directly elected Legislative Council representative, 32-year old Murang'a lecturer Julius Kiano. Meanwhile, Kenyatta and the Mau Mau hardcore remain in indefinite detention.

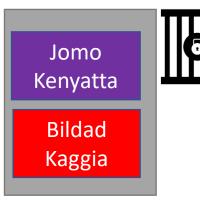


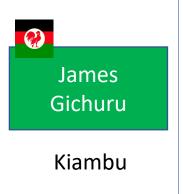


Governor Ronald Ngala Renison (KADU)

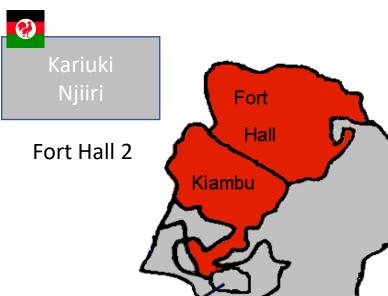
Feb 1961: The Kenyatta Election











Nairob

In the 1961 "Kenyatta election", with the gerrymandered constituencies designed to create European-only constituencies alongside African ones, the newly-formed KANU wins. Kiano (appointed as Minister in an experimental arrangement for a year) is re-elected in the twinseat Fort Hall. Kiambu chooses James Gichuru, close ally of Kenyatta and elected in his stead.

Although the largest party, KANU goes into opposition, refusing to join the government until Kenyatta is released.

KANU

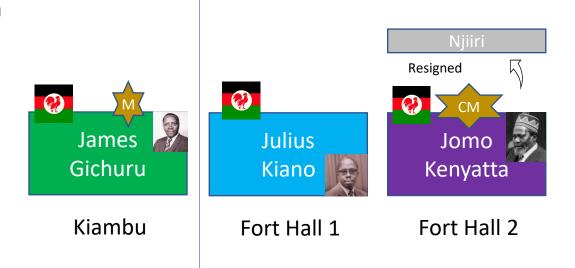




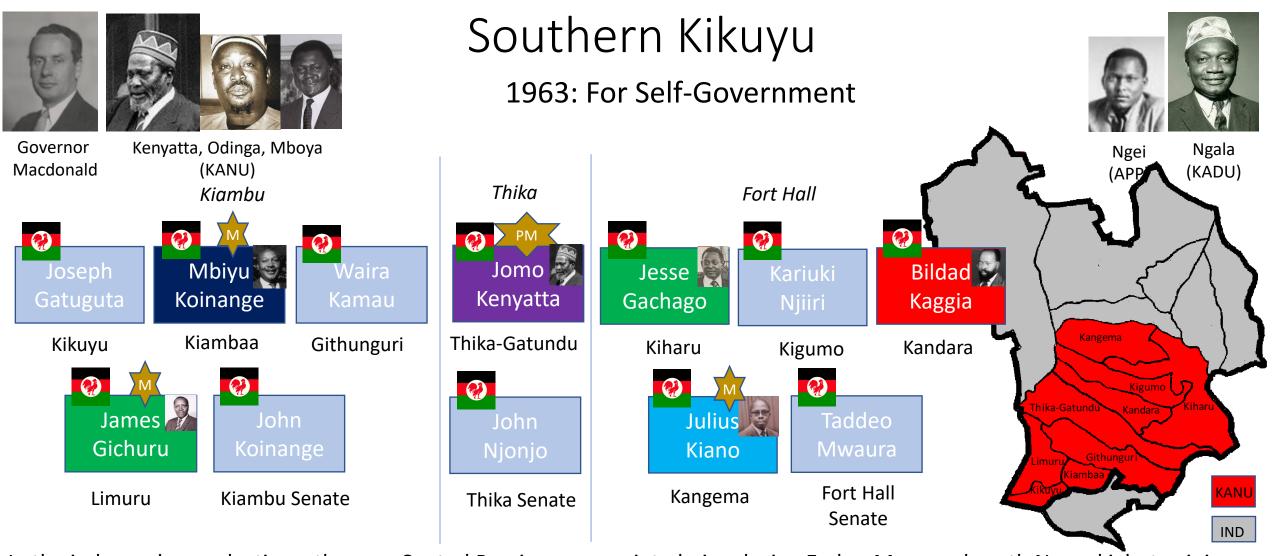


Governor Jomo Ronald Renison Kenyatta Ngala

Apr 1962-63: Coalition Government



In January 1962, a freed Kenyatta is elected unopposed to the Legco, a seat having been found for him by Kariuki Njiiri resigning. In the KANU-KADU coalition government of April 1962 – May 1963, Kenyatta becomes joint chief minister alongside Ngala. Gichuru becomes Finance Minister. Kiano, for balance, is demoted to parliamentary secretary.



In the independence elections, the new Central Province comes into being, losing Embu, Meru and north Nanyuki, but gaining Kirinyaga (no longer part of Embu), southern Nanyuki and the Aberdare mountains (previously white highlands), now an area for Kikuyu settlement. KANU wins every seat. Kenyetta is unopposed in Thika, Gichuru is unopposed and is joined by Kenyatta's friend Mbiyu Koinange in Kiambaa. Kenyatta becomes Prime Minister. The "Kiambu Mafia" (Kenyatta, Koinange, Gichuru and Njoroge Mungai in Nairobi) dominate the cabinet. Radical Bildad Kaggia receives a junior position while Kiano returns as Fort Hall minister.



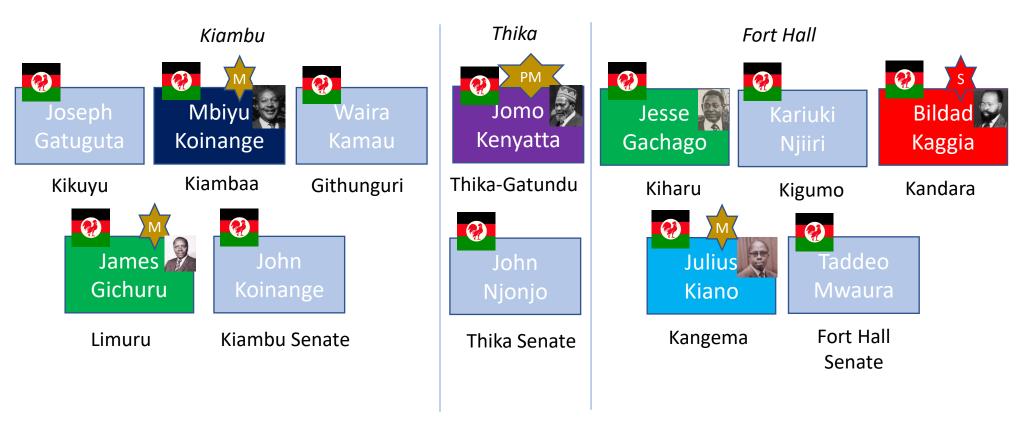
Kenyatta, Odinga, Mboya, Ngei (KANU)

South Kikuyu

1964



Ngala (KADU)



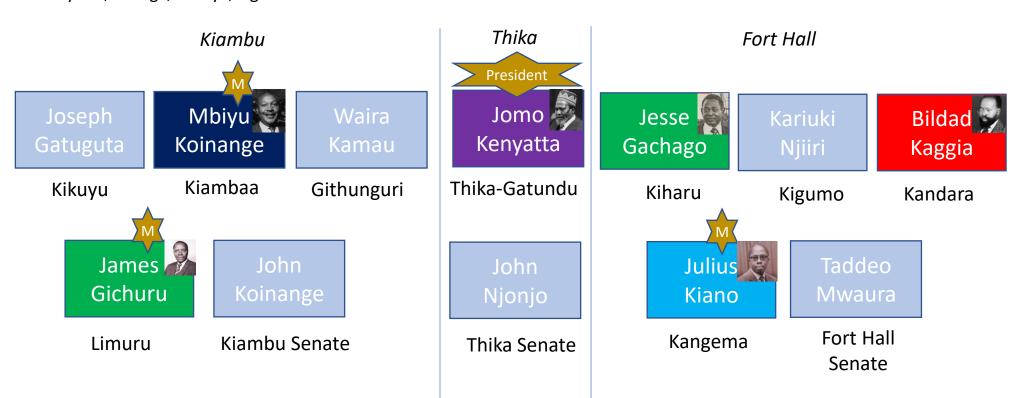
In June 1964, as tensions mount over long term strategic direction and east-west relationships, Kaggia is sacked as a parliamentary secretary



Kenyatta, Odinga, Mboya, Ngala

1964: The First One-Party State

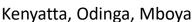






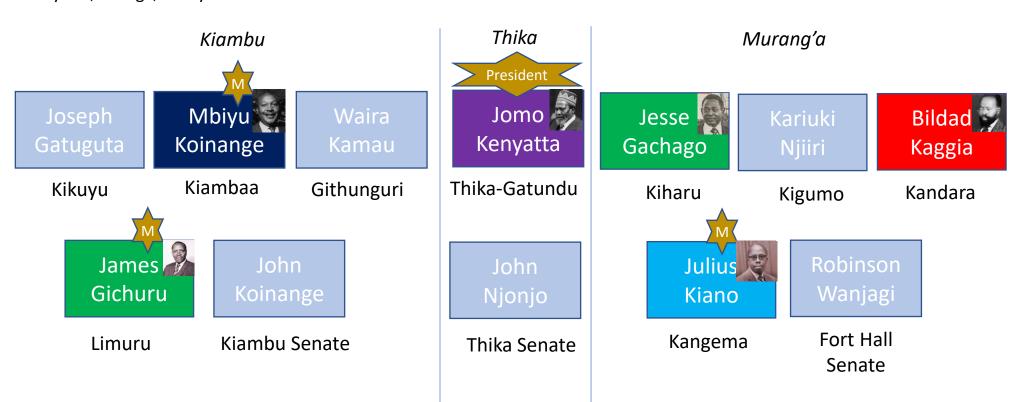
In November 1964, Ngala and Muliro fold KADU and join KANU, creating a *de facto* one party state. In December, Kenya becomes a republic with Kenyatta elevated to President. Ministers swap portfolios but all stay in office. Charles Njonjo (son of a Kiambu chief) is appointed Attorney General and ex-officio cabinet member.





1965-66: By-elections





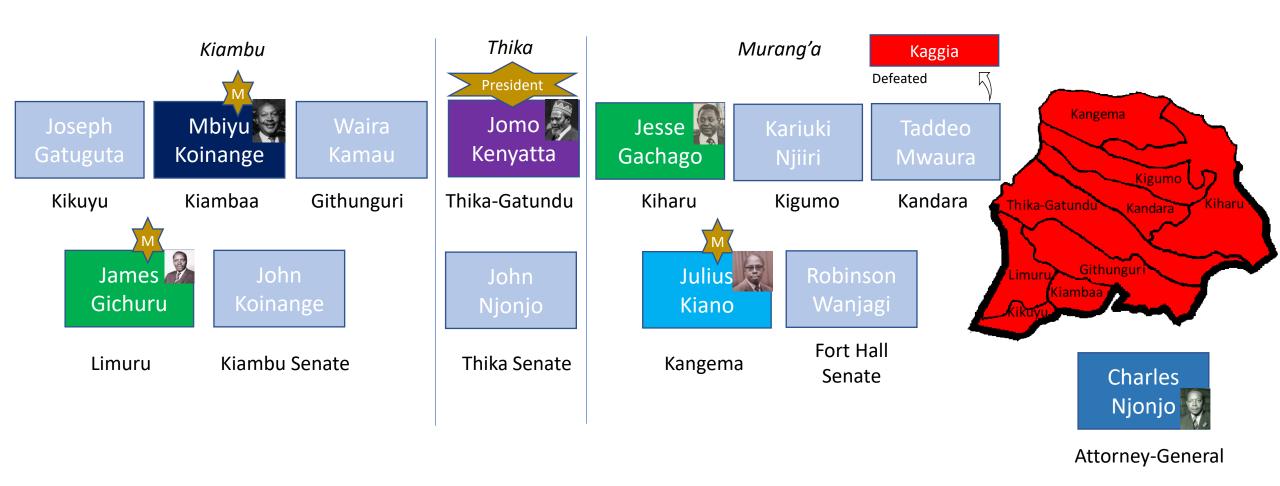


In the regular 1965 Senate by-election, Taddeo Mwaura is replaced by Robinson Wanjagi. Late in 1965, Fort Hall is renamed Murang'a district.





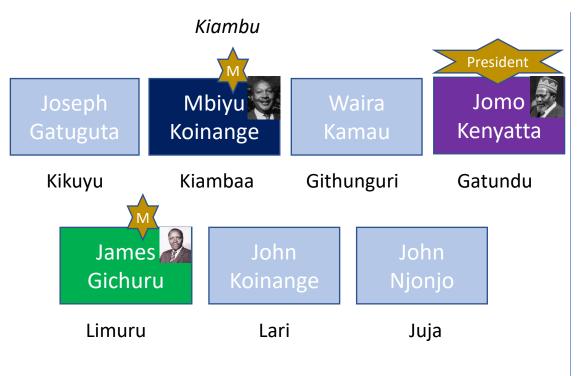
1966: Little General Election - KPU vs KANU

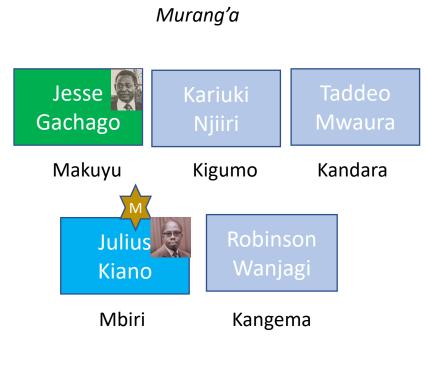


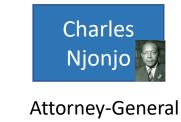
In 1966, Kaggia joins Odinga to form the KPU. He loses his seat after a constitutional amendment and is probably rigged out in the resulting Little General Election. All other MPs and senators from southern Central Province remain loyal.











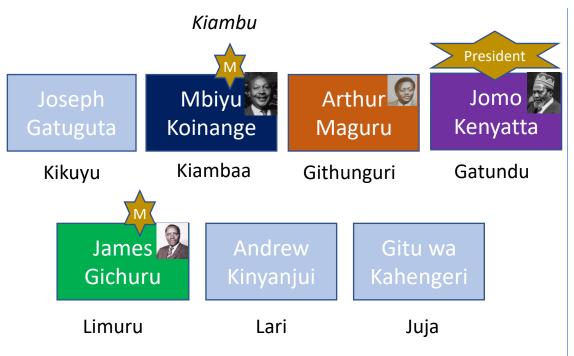
The Senate is abolished, as is Thika District, which is split between Kiambu, Murang'a (and Machakos?). Senators are assigned to three new constituencies.

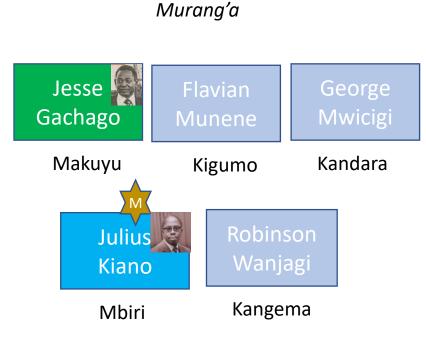


1969 General Election



One Party State (Part 2): 1969-82



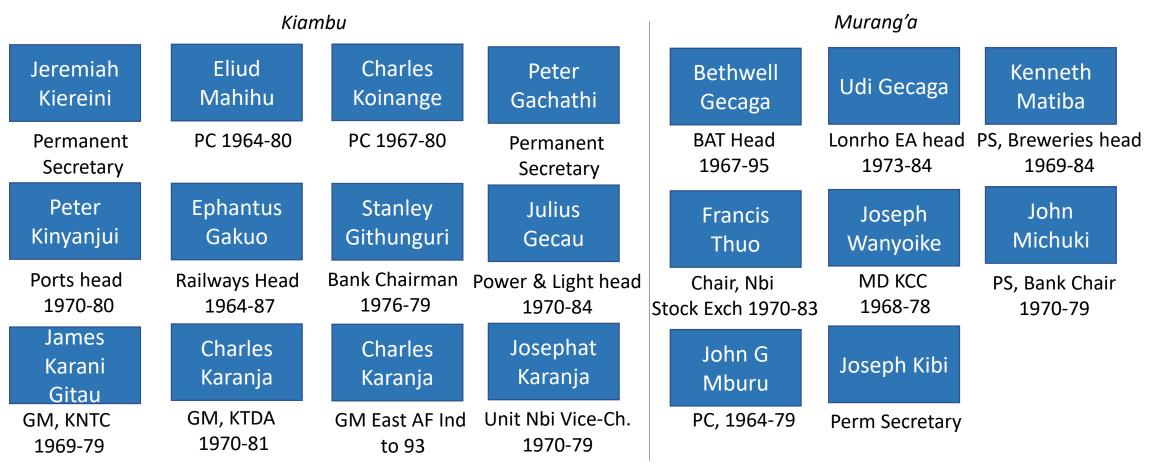






Attorney-General

KPU is banned, Odinga detained. Return of one-party state. Little change in leadership. In Kiambu, Kenyatta, Koinange and Gichuru are re-elected and son of colonial chief Arthur Magugu joins them. Njonjo is reappointed. Kiano and Gachago are re-elected in Murang'a and Kiano remains Murang'a minister



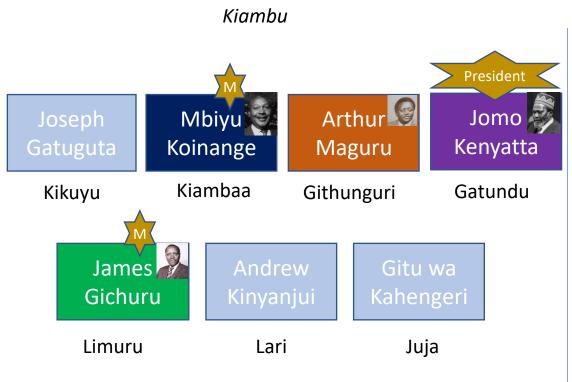
By now, it is clear that power and fortune has trickled down rapidly into southern Central Province. The power of Kiambu and Murang'a lies as much in its state officials and private sector magnates as its political inner circle (which dispenses much of this largesse). There are dozens of influential Kiambu and Murang'a businessmen, parastatal executives, permanent secretaries, bank chairmen and Provincial Commissioners throughout the Kenyatta era and beyond, simply too many to show on the same pages as the political class (as done with other groups)

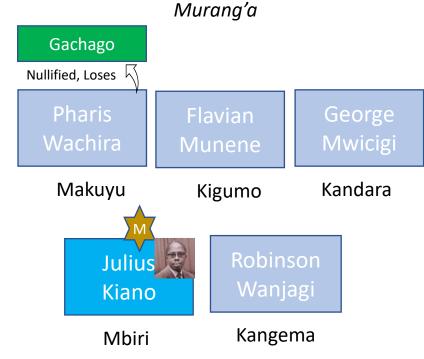


1970 By-election



One Party State (Part 2): 1969-82







Nominated MP

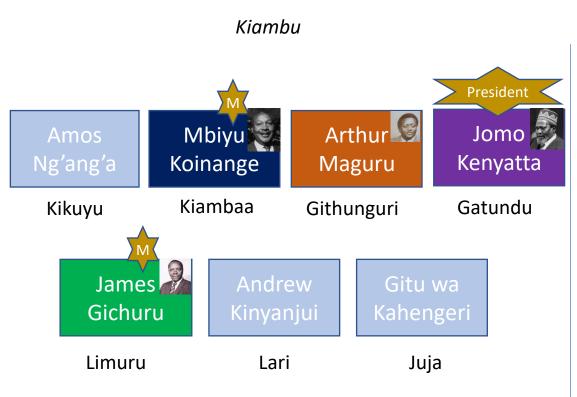


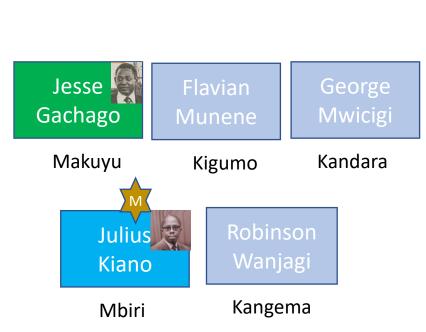
1970 Gachago's victory is nullified but he is allowed to stand, and loses.



1974 General Election







Murang'a





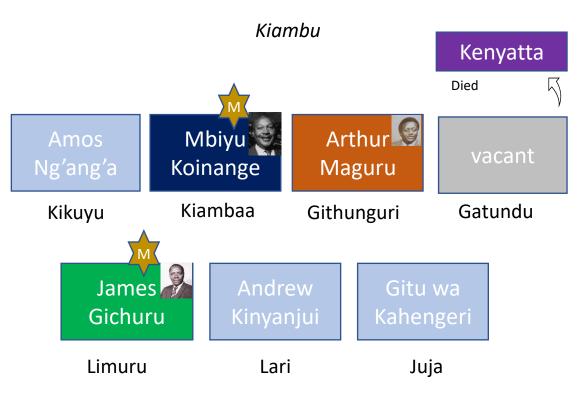
Attorney-General

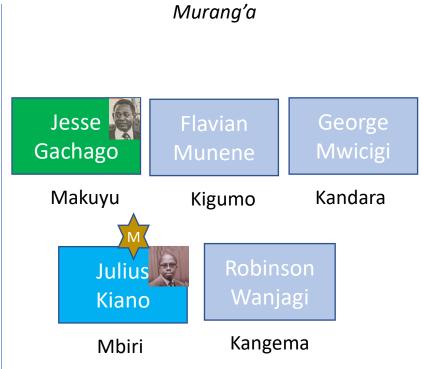
1974 general election. The height of Kikuyu dominance of Kenya. Kenyatta, Gichuru, Koinange and Kiano are again victorious (most unopposed) and Njonjo returns to the Cabinet again. GEMA tribal union chair Njenga Karume is made a nominated MP

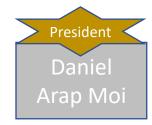


Aug 1978 Kenyatta Dies













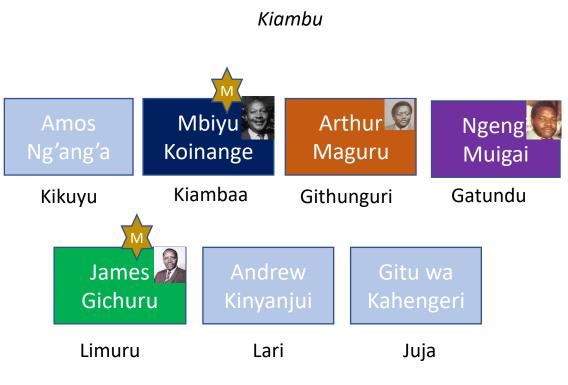
Attorney-General

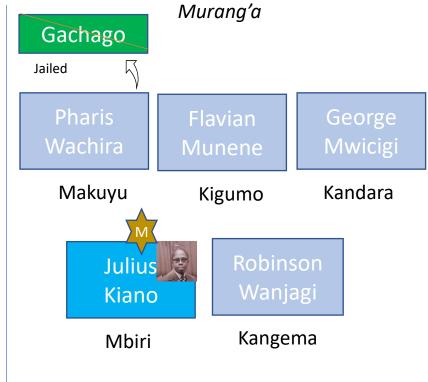
Kenyatta dies in August 1978 and Daniel arap Moi is sworn in as acting and then full president (having survived efforts to change the constitution to prevent this happening during 1976-77). This was achieved with the support of Njonjo and Mwai Kibaki. Koinange remains a minister but is side-lined to a minor post



Jan 1979: By-elections









Attorney-General

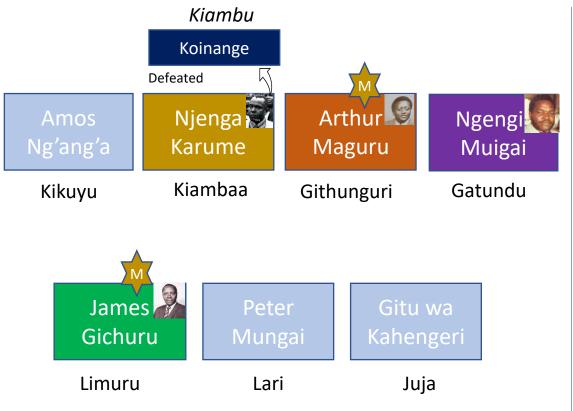
Njenga

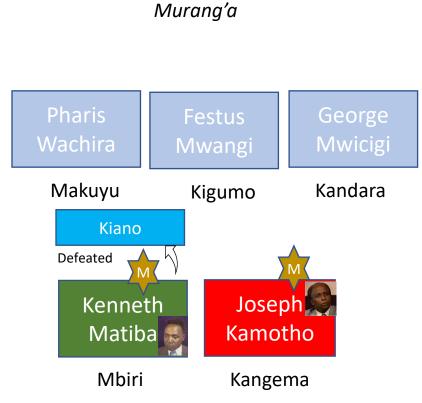
Kenyatta's death and the imprisonment of Gachago for coffee theft cause by-elections. Kenyatta is succeeded by his favourite nephew Ngengi Muigai.



1979 General Election: A New Broom









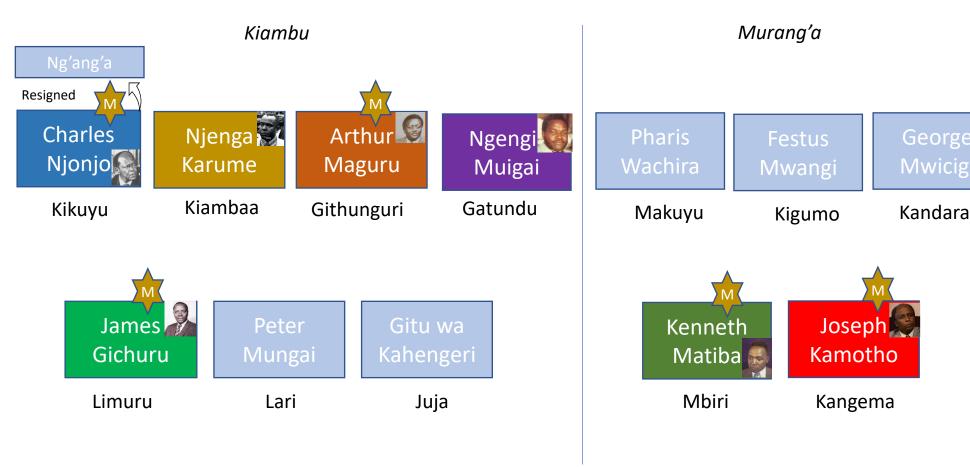
Attorney-General

In Kiambu, new president Moi backs GEMA head Karume to defeat Koinange. Magugu, Gichuru and Muigai are all re-elected. In Murang'a, ambitious Kenneth Matiba enters politics to defeat Kiano. Njonjo-ally Joseph Kamotho wins Kangema. Gichuru is joined by Magugu as second Kiambu minister and Matiba and Kamotho are both appointed for Murang'a. Kingmaker Njonjo remains Attorney General with Cabinet status.



1980: Njonjo Enters Politics





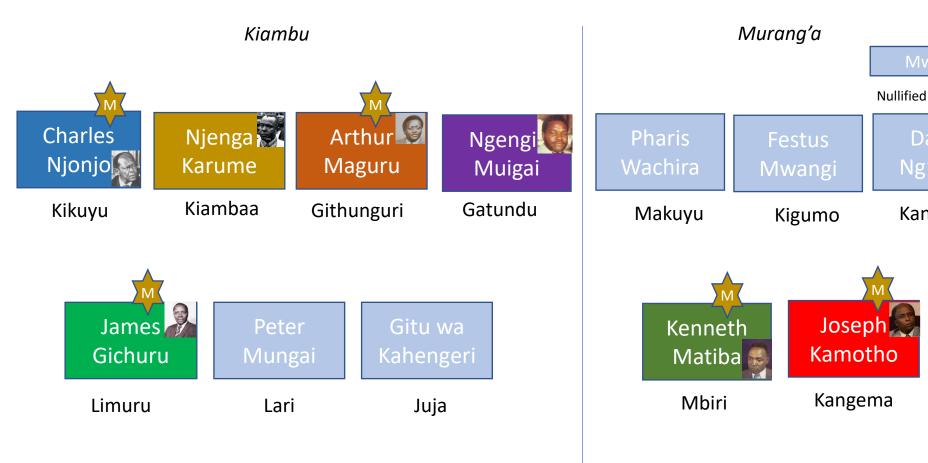


Njonjo reaches retirement age for a civi servant and persuades the MP for his home Kikuyu to resign, creating a vacancy which he then assumes unopposed. He becomes minister for Home and Constitutional affairs. Protégé James Karugu (also from Kiambu) is appointed in his stead.



1981: Tensions mount







David

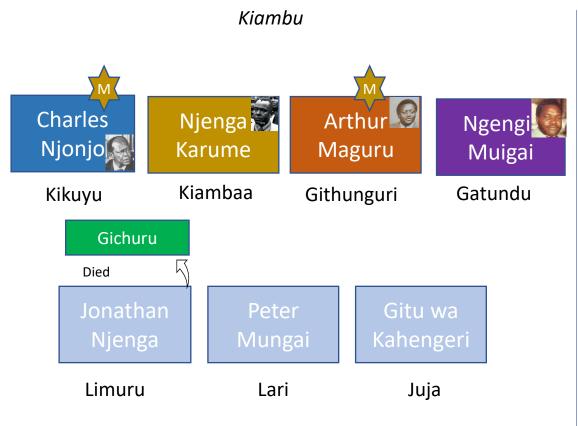
Kandara

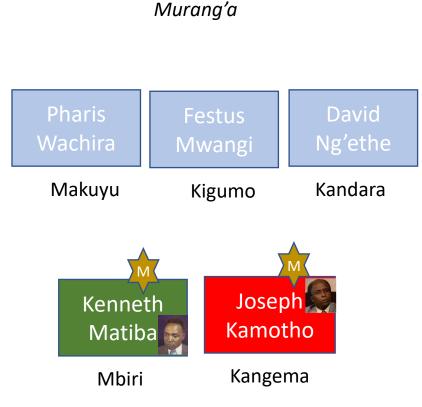
Political tensions grow. Njonjo's cousin is tried for training a paramilitary group to overthrown the government. Karugu resigns and is replaced by Joseph Kamere (also from Kiambu). In Murang'a, Mwicigi's election is nullified and he is barred from standing and replaced by David Ng'ethe.



1982: The Storm Breaks









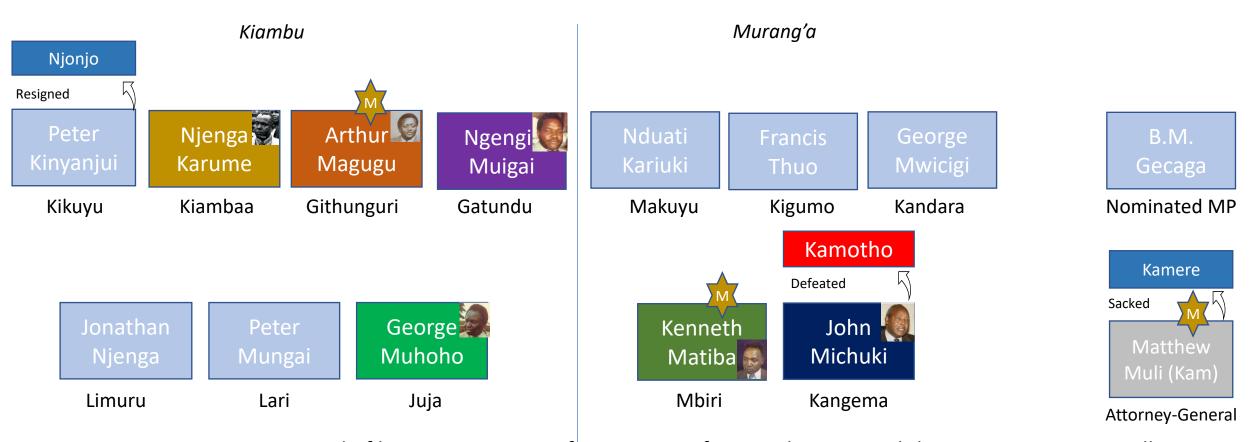
Attorney-General

Kenya becomes a formal one party state. Preventative detention returns. A failed Luo-led August 1982 coup attempt leads to the rapid deconstruction of Kikuyu power. Njonjo loses Moi's trust and becomes a marked man. Gichuru dies and a by-election replaces him



1983: Snap General Election



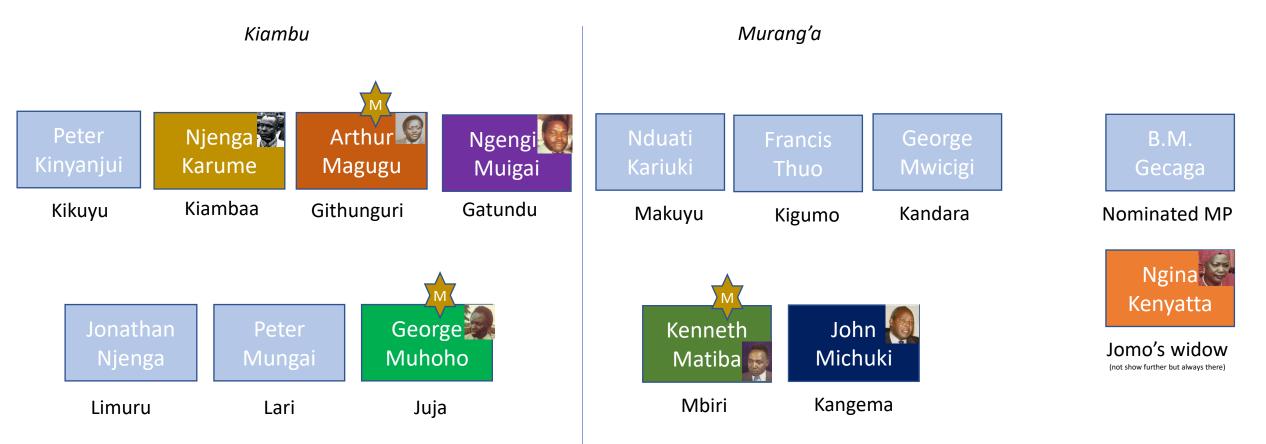


Moi moves against Njonjo, accused of being traitor. He is fore to resign from parliament and the government. Moi calls a snap general election. In Kiambu, Njonjo is replaced by an ally, and Mama Ngina Kenyatta's brother George Muhoho is elected MP for Juja. In Murang'a, Matiba wins and his ally John Michuki defeats out of favour Kamotho. Southern Central now has only two ministers, Magugu and Matiba. In the runup, Kamere is sacked and replaced for the first time since 1964 by an attorney general not from Kiambu.



1987: Promotion



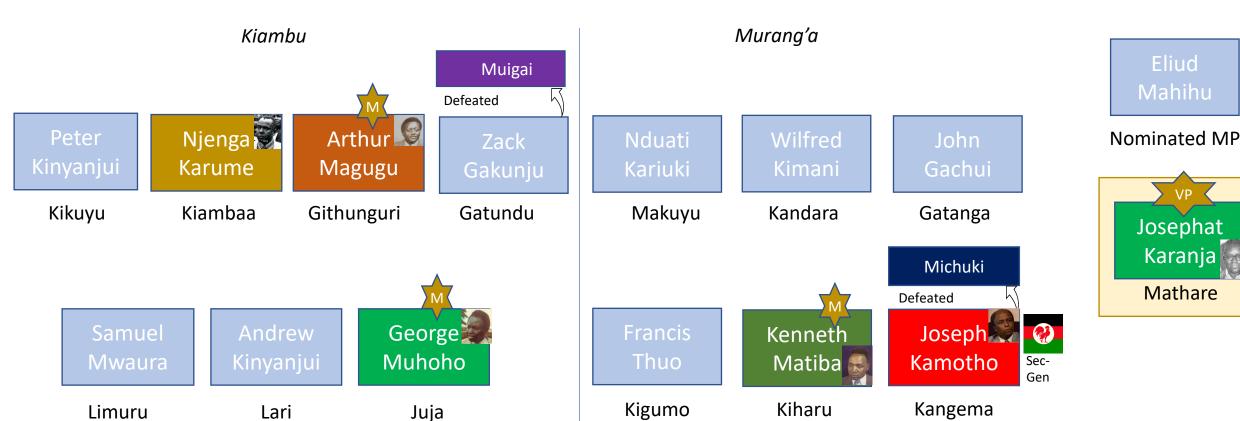


1984 is dominated by the Njonjo inquiry which ends inconclusively with the retirement of the ex-Attorney General from public life. Despite the chaos and repression outside, the 1983 dramatis personae remain in post for five years, the only change being the elevation of Muhoho to a cabinet post in 1987 as cover, as Moi's redistributive and therefore anti-Kikuyu strategy strengthens. Mama Ngina Kenyatta, Jomo's widow, remains an everpresent shadow and the family focus on business



1988 (Public Queue Voting)



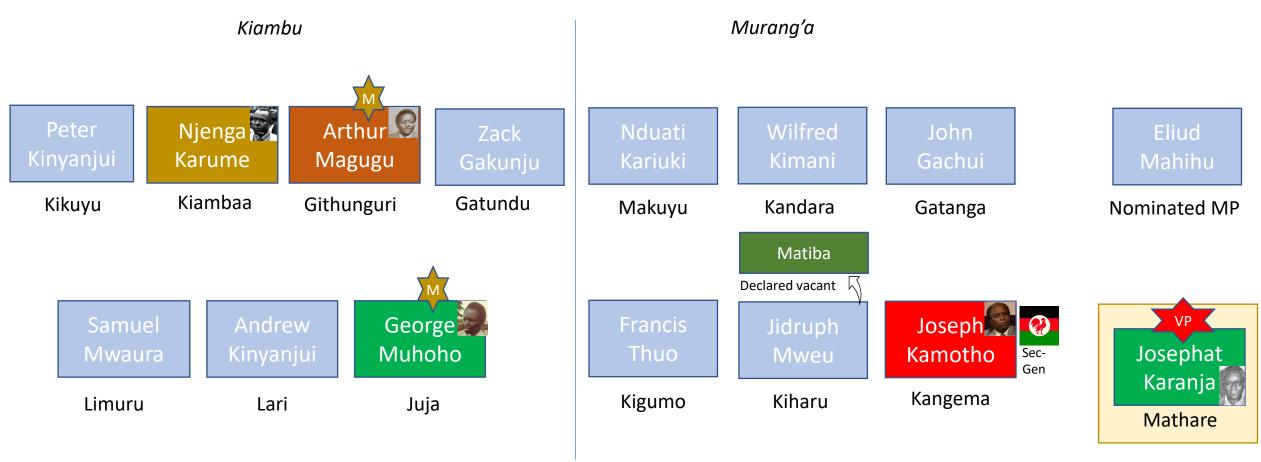


The 1987 boundary redistribution adds one seat to Murang'a but none to out-of-favour Kiambu. In the rigged queue-voting primary and then general elections of 1988, Ngengi Muigai is rigged out in Kiambu but others return. Kamotho replaces Michuki but Matiba defeats Kiano again. Josephat Karanja, from Kiambu but elected as a Nairobi MP, is installed as VP to replace Kibaki. Kamotho is chosen as KANU Secretary-General



1988-89: Matiba Resigns



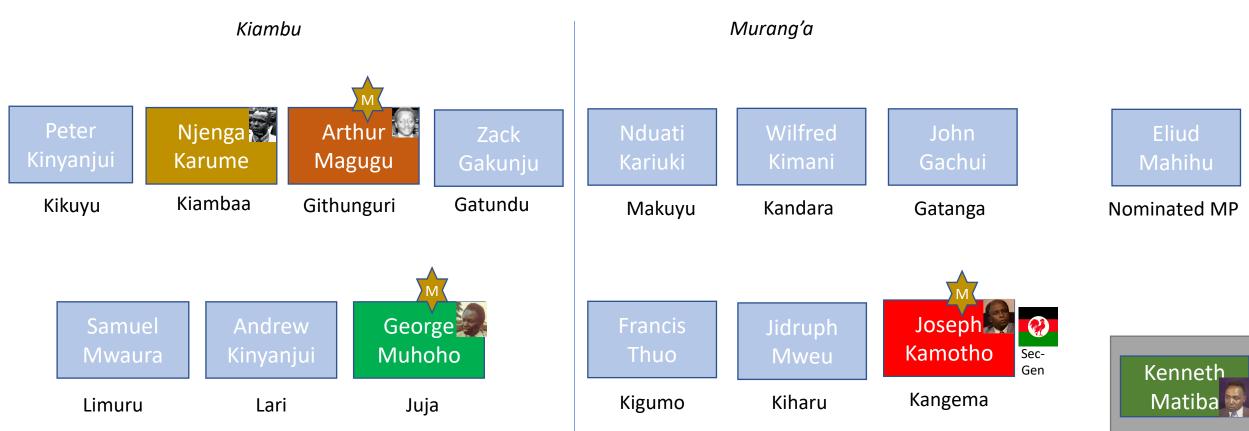


In December 1988, rigged out of his KANU position, Matiba explosively resigns from the government (the first minister to resign since 1966) and is expelled from KANU. Under the single party rules he is stripped of his constituency seat and a February 1989 by-election is rigged to ensure a little known pliable figure is selected. Kenya loses a second Kikuyu Vice-President as Karanja is unceremoniously sacked (for reasons never disclosed) in 1989 and like Njonjo is forced to resign his seat (see Nairobi review).



1990: Multi-Party Wave 1



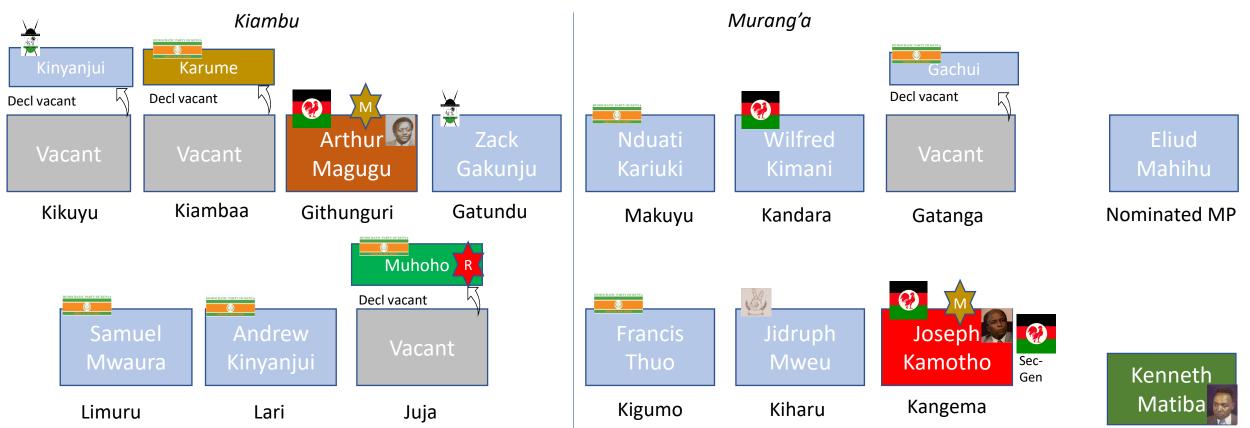


In May 1990, Matiba and Charles Rubia (also from Murang'a but with his base in Nairobi) lead a wave of anti government protest designed to restore multi party democracy. They are detained without trial leading to the Saba Saba riots of 7 July 1990 and mass crackdowns. In prison, Matiba has two strokes and is eventually freed in June 1991, severely ill. In the same year, Kamotho returns to ministerial office





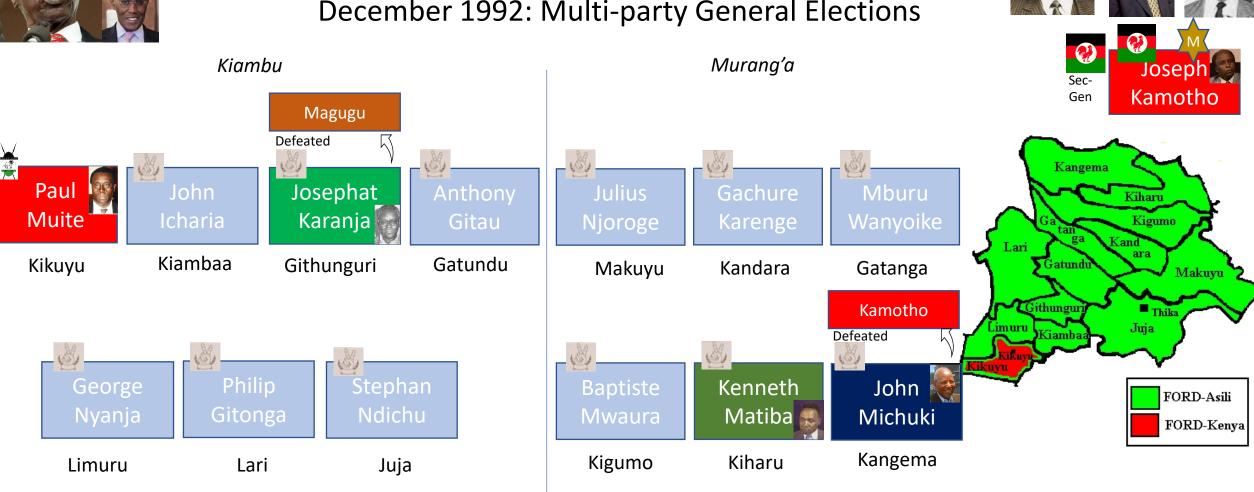
1991-92: Multi-Party Wave 2



KANU reforms and the west piles pressure on Kenya to restore democracy. Ethnic clashes begin. Multi-party democracy returns Dec 1991. The Democratic Party and FORD are formed and four southern Kikuyu MPs (including Minister Muhoho) defect and lose their seats. These are not declared vacant, leaving their constituencies without MPs for a year. Matiba is in London recuperating, then returns to launch a no-compromise bid to take the presidency via FORD, leading to an irrevocable split with the 'young turks' and Odinga and the creation of two "FORD" (-Asili and -Kenya) parties. In October 1992 with parliament dissolved, more MPs defect leaving only 3/13 south central MPs in KANU.



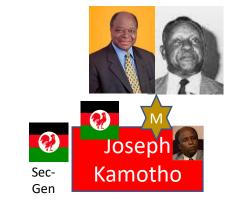
December 1992: Multi-party General Elections

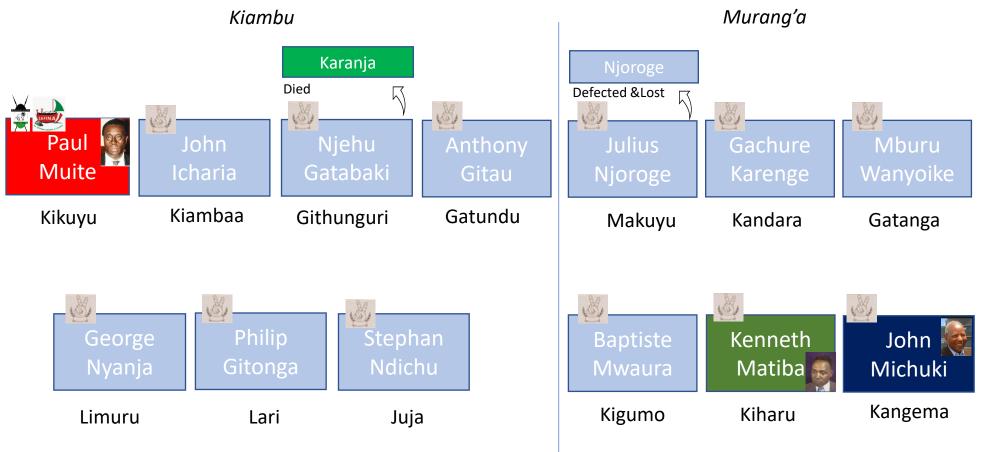


In the December 1992 elections, Matiba's FORD Asili wins the region, with a cadre of new, radical figures. The DP does well in the northern Kikuyu but are unexpectedly routed in Kiambu. Karume and Muhoho both lose, as do KANU's Magugu and Kamotho. Matiba wins his seat but comes second in the presidential election on a four-way split to Moi, a result he refuses to accept. KANU and Moi win nothing. Activist lawyer Paul Muite is elected for FORD-Kenya on a personal vote. To retains a foothold in the Kikuyu, Moi nominates Kamotho to parliament and appoints him a minister.



1993-95 Defections and Deaths



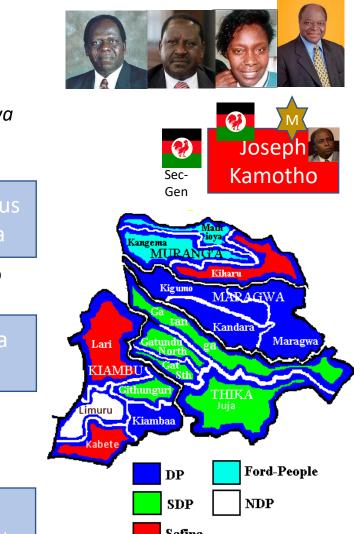


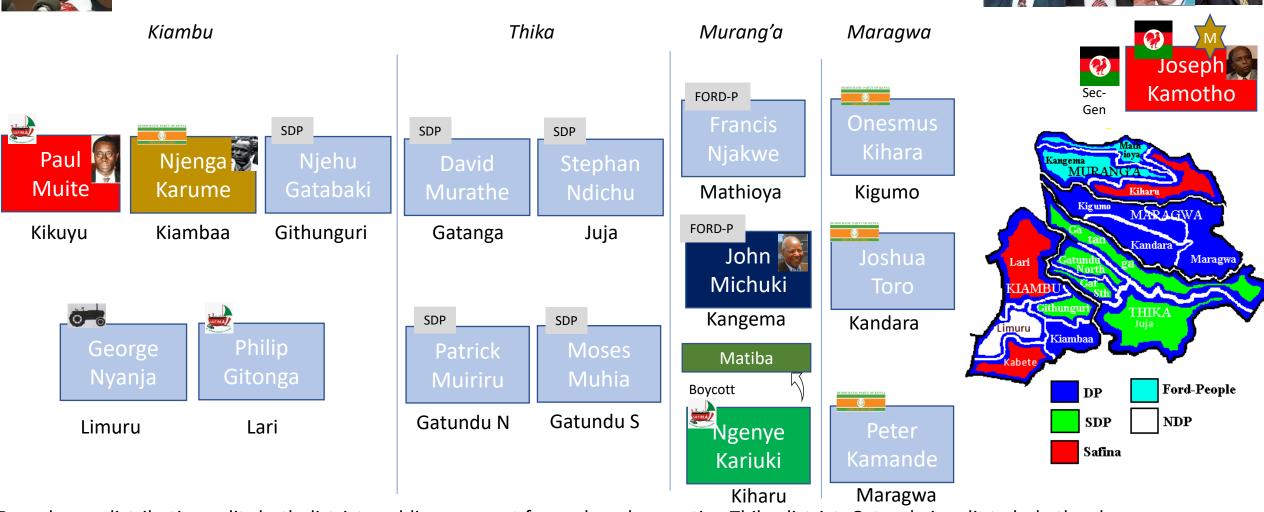


1993 Njoroge in Makuyu defects to KANU and triggers a by-election, but is roundly defeated. In 1994, Josephat Karanja dies and FORD-Asili again hold the seat. 1995 Muite sets up Safina but doesn't formally defect. Meanwhile FORD-Asili gradually implodes in internecine fighting. The Kenyattas focus on growing their business empire through the 1990s with Muhoho, younger son, now leading their expansion.



Dec 1997 General Election



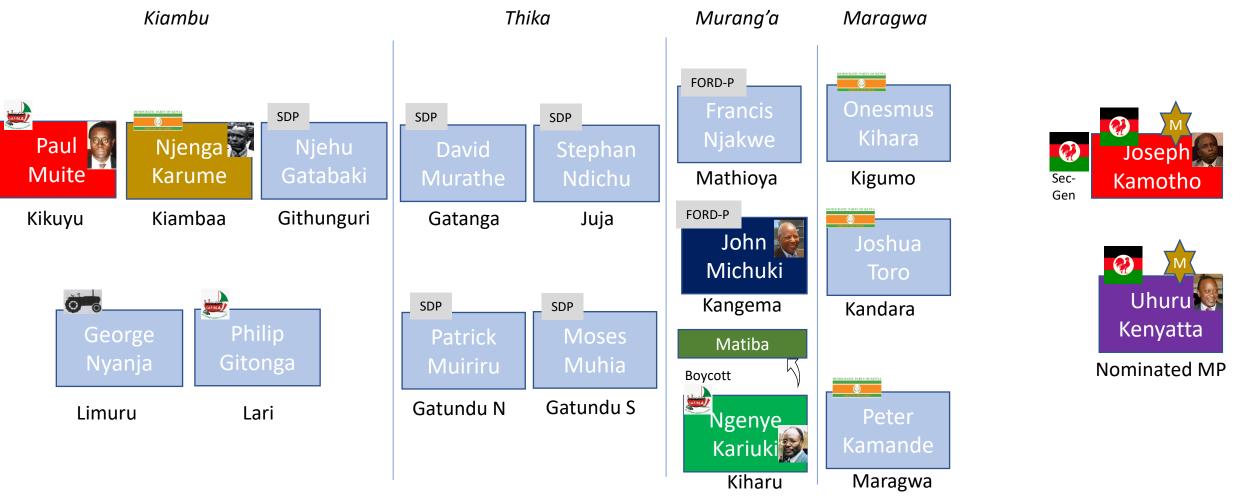


Boundary redistribution splits both districts, adding one seat for each and recreating Thika district. Gatundu is split to help the chances (unsuccessfully) of Uhuru Kenyatta, son of the ex-President. Some electoral reforms are implemented. The region votes pro-opposition again, but this time Kibaki wins every seat in the presidency, Matiba having boycotted the election. FORD-Asili MPs split, some boycotting, most re-elected in homes elsewhere. A lonely Kamotho is renominated and reappointed Minister. Soon after, Raila's NDP joins an alliance of convenience with KANU.



2001: A Plan Develops



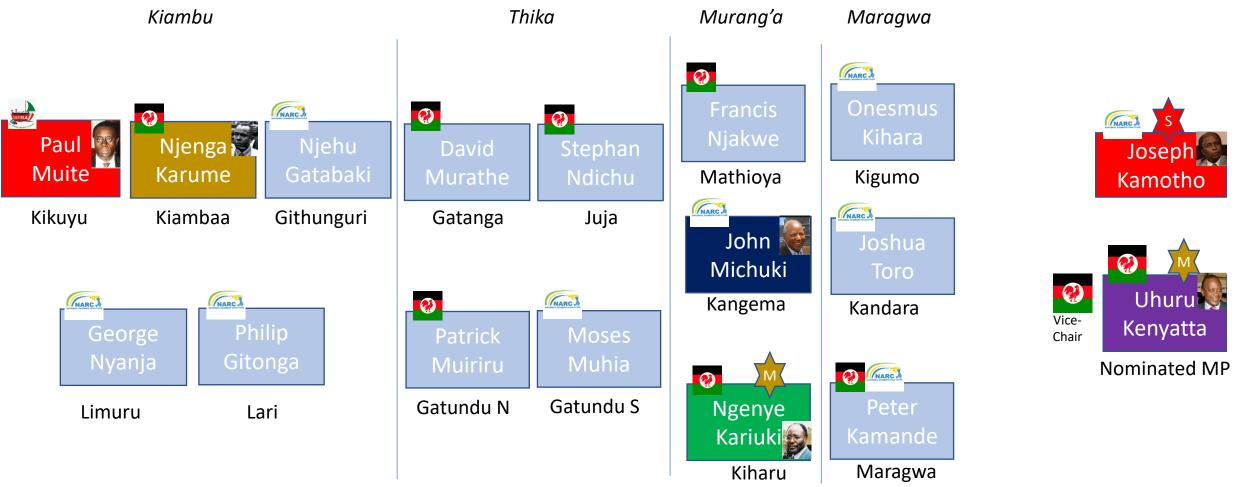


In 2001, while Raila Odinga and the Luo move closer to the centre of power, Moi nominates to parliament and appoints a Minister Uhuru Kenyatta, the first step in a radical shift of alliances.



2002: The Switch and the Collapse





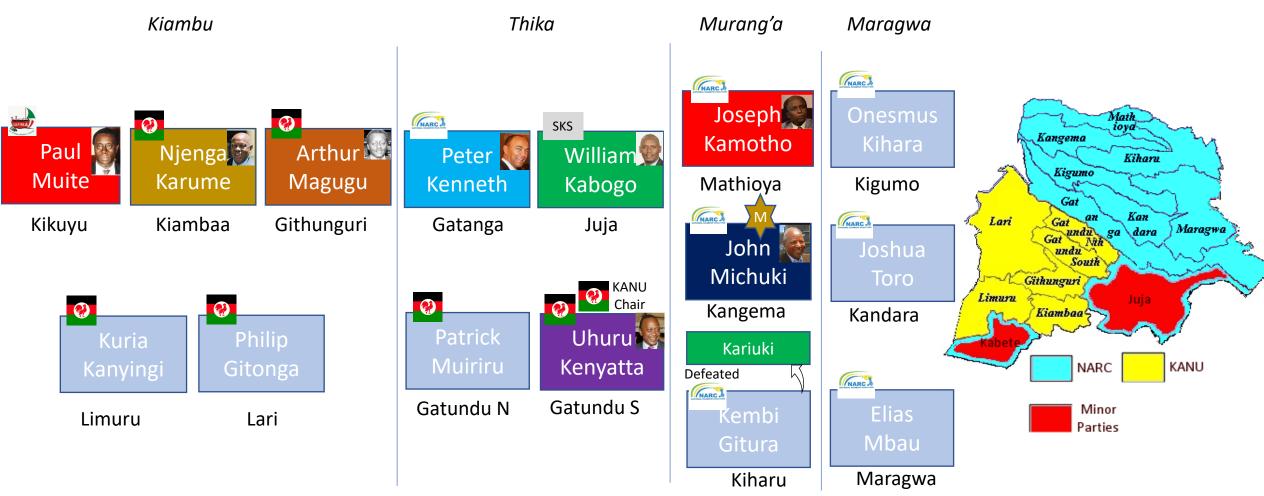
March 2002 KANU restructures itself. Uhuru Kenyatta becomes Vice Chairman and Kamotho is sacked. Despite deep opposition Moi drives Uhuru's selection as his successor, leading to a mass walking form party leaders from most other regions, who then made common cause as NARC with the opposition centred round Kibaki. In contrast, half of south Central Province cleaves to Kenyatta, now the insider and a region which had never truly voted KANU since 1983 switches sides. The rest join NARC. As defections worsen, Ngenye Kariuki is appointed a Minister. Kamotho is sacked







2002-3: Moi Retires, Kibaki Elected, Kenyatta Defeated



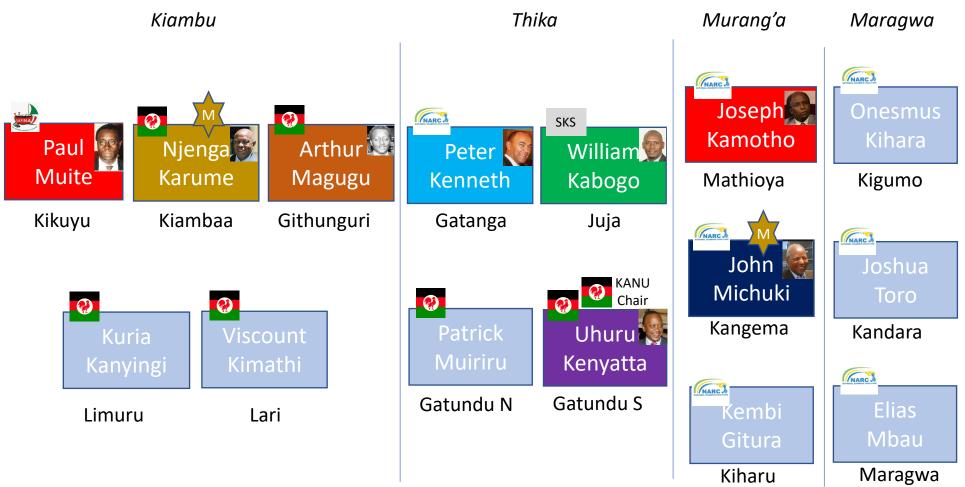
The NARC alliance has a clean sweep in presidency and parliament in Murang'a and Mathioya. Kenyatta and KANU dominate Kiambu but his Thika home is split. Newcomers Peter Kenneth and William Kabogo join parliament. In his contested, slimline NARC Cabinet, Kibaki appoints only Michuki from south Central as a minister. More loyal northern Central does better. Kenyatta, now acting KANU Chairman, becomes leader of the opposition as KANU fragments.







2003-4 Dissent and Restructuring

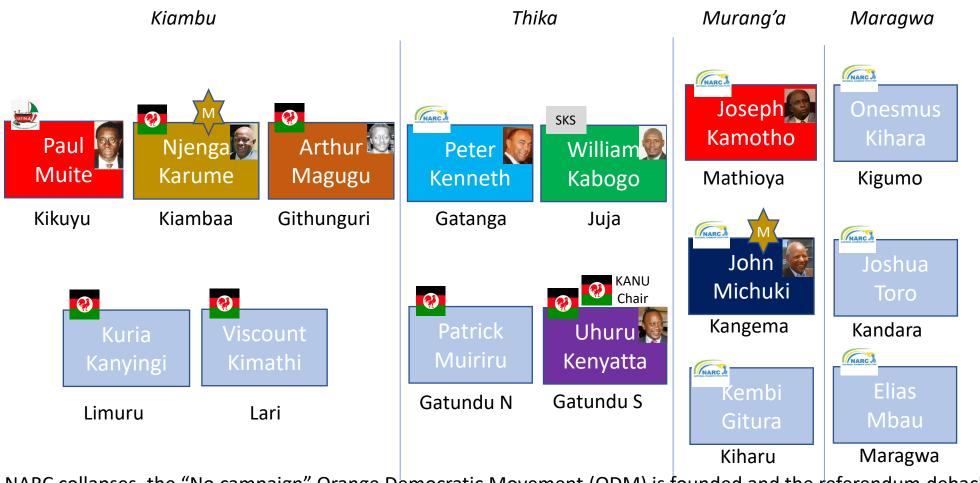


As NARC gradually collapses, with the constitutional reform movement and power sharing among many causes, Kibaki reaches out to old colleagues in June 2004 to bring them into government to protect him against the coming split. Karume becomes a minister (while remaining in KANU). Kenyatta faces a split in KANU but survives as chair in Jan 2005 elections





2005-7: The Second Coalition Government

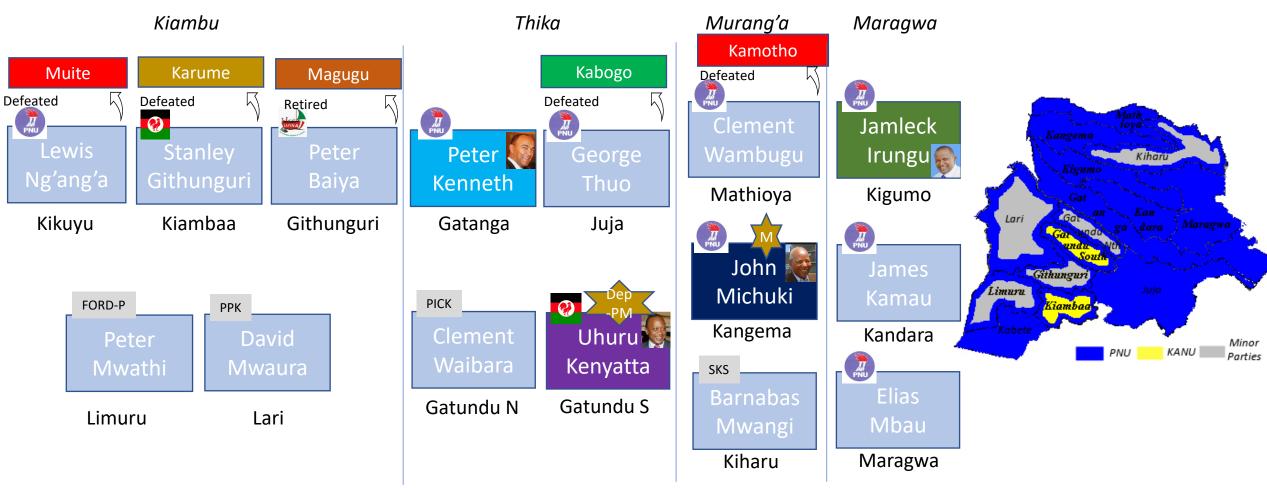


NARC collapses, the "No campaign" Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) is founded and the referendum debacle splits Kenya, leaving the government in the minority. South Central province stays loyal and votes overwhelmingly yes (Uhuru campaigns for no with little effect outside Thika). In Kibaki's cobbled together government of December 2005, nothing changes in the region. Kibaki meanwhile has lost control of NARC and creates two new parties – NARC-Kenya and then the PNU - as a reelection vehicle for pro-government forces. Eventually, as the threat from Odinga and the ODM team is overwhelming, Kenyatta decides not to stand for president and KANU backs Kibaki for reelection





2007-8: General Election, Chaos and Coalition

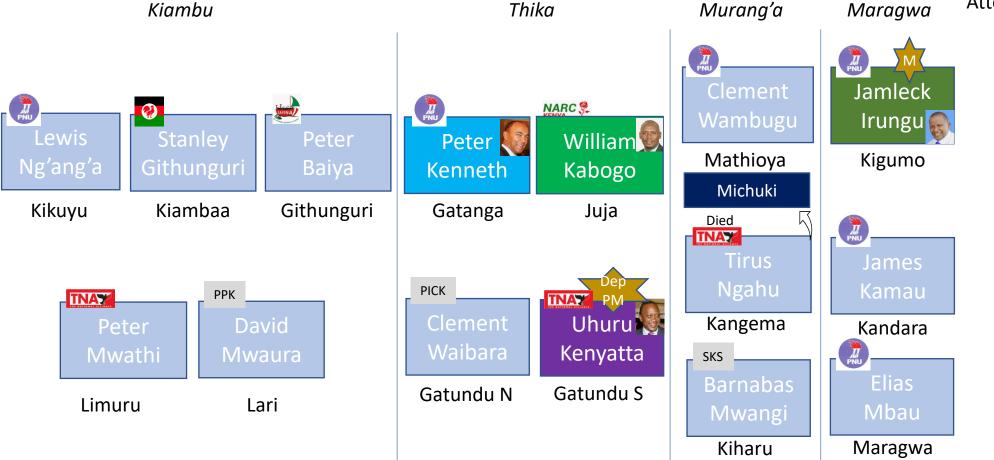


ODM-PNU battle nationwide, but southern Central Province is wholly pro-Kibaki. In Parliament, all MPs are pro-PNU but from varied parties. Muite, Karume, Magugu, Kabogo and Kamotho all lose, introducing a mostly new set of MPs. Uhuru is re-elected for KANU and becomes a minister and in April 2018 Deputy Prime Minister in the coalition government with ODM.



Southern Kikuyu 2010-12





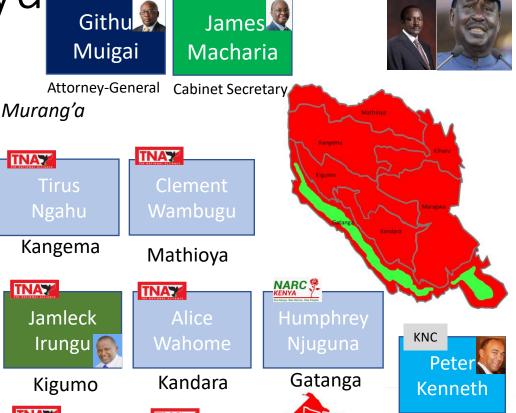
With the new constitution endorsed in 2010 but not fully in effect, 2010-12 is a period of rapid change, coming fully into effect with the 2013 elections. In 2010 Thuo's election is nullified and Kabogo wins a by-election for NARC-Kenya. In Feb 2012, Michuki dies and a candidate from Kenyatta's new TNA (The National Alliance) is elected. Irungu replaces Michuki as the first "Minister for Nairobi". Kenyatta, facing trial in the Hague with Ruto, resigns as Finance Minister in Jan 2012 but remains deputy PM. In late 2012 along with Kikuyu allies, he defects to TNA. Meanwhile the Attorney General's role has returned to Kiambu with Githu Muigai's appointment in 2011

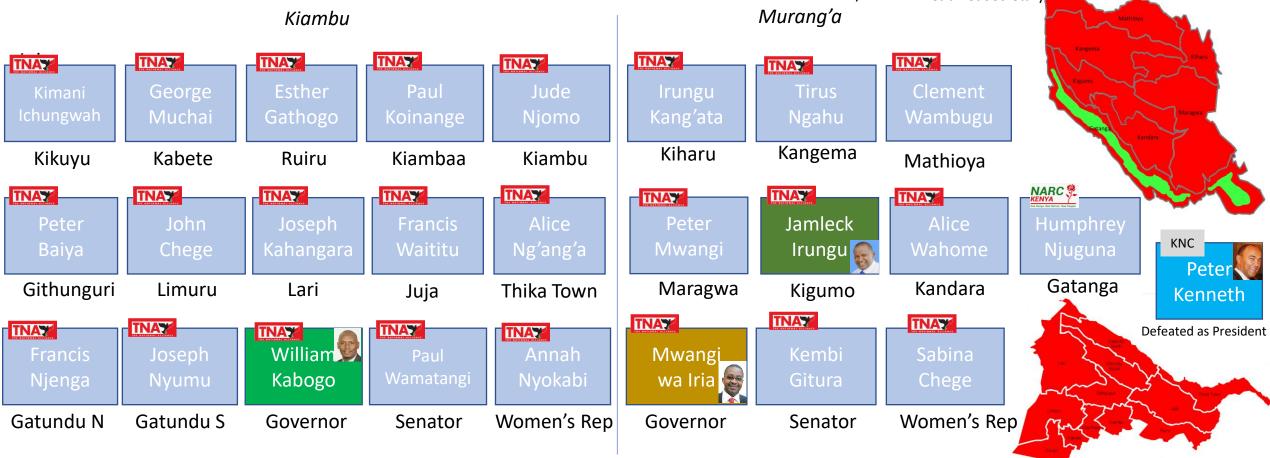






Southern Kikuyu 2013: Second Republic





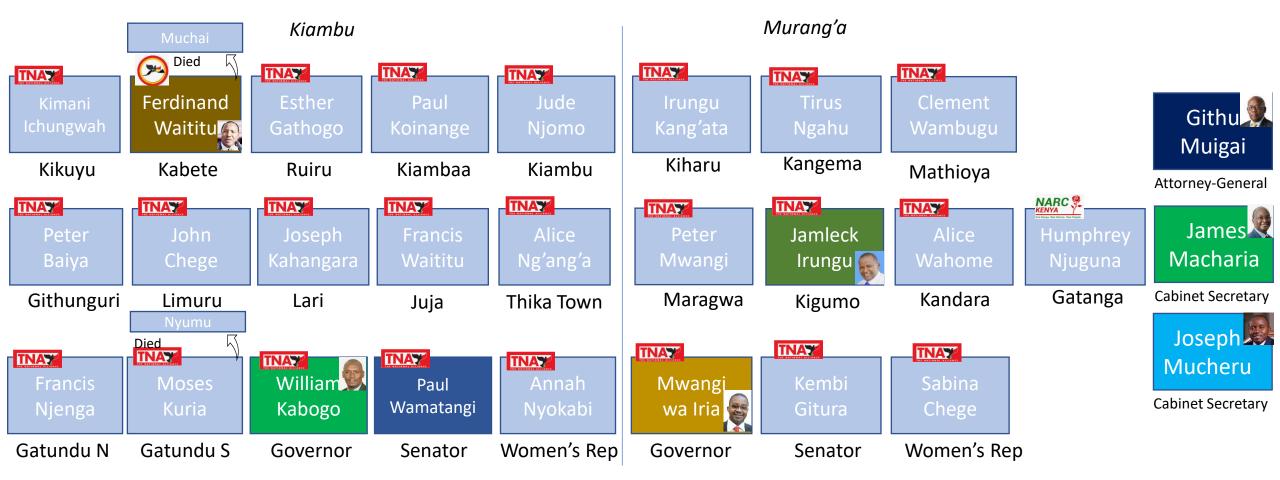
New constitution, new boundaries and the region reunites as two counties, Kiambu and Murang'a once more. Peri-urban Kiambu grows to 12 seats, Murang'a to seven. Bicameral parliament, Governors. Ministers no longer MPs. Allied with William Ruto, Uhuru Kenyatta wins every seat by massive margins and TNA takes 24 of 25 posts. ODM is irrelevant. Kabogo and Mwangi wa Iria are the region's first governors. Uhuru is elected president and appoints a mostly non-political cabinet including Murang'a Cabinet Secretary, James Macharia.





2014-15: By-elections & reshuffles





2014 Joseph Nyumu dies and is replaced by outspoken Moses Kuria as "Kenyatta's MP". In Dec 2014 the ICC case against Kenyatta for the Nakuru killings in 2008 is dropped. In 2015, Kabete MP Muchai is murdered and replaced by ex-Nairobi populist Ferdinand Waititu on the new Jubilee Alliance Party. In 2015 Joseph Mucheru from Kiambu is also appointed to the cabinet. In 2016, the political system shifts again as Kenyatta and Ruto persuade smaller parties to join their umbrella "Jubilee Alliance", with Kenyatta as party leader and ex-MP David Murathe vice-Chairman



Kabete

Mwathi

Limuru

Moses

Gatundu S

Kikuyu

Githunguri

Gatundu N

Kiambu

Simon

Ruiru

Lari

Kabogo Defeated ⋉

Ferdinand

Governor

Waititu

Paul

Kiambaa

Francis

Juja

Senator

Jubilee

Southern Kikuyu

Jude

Kiambu

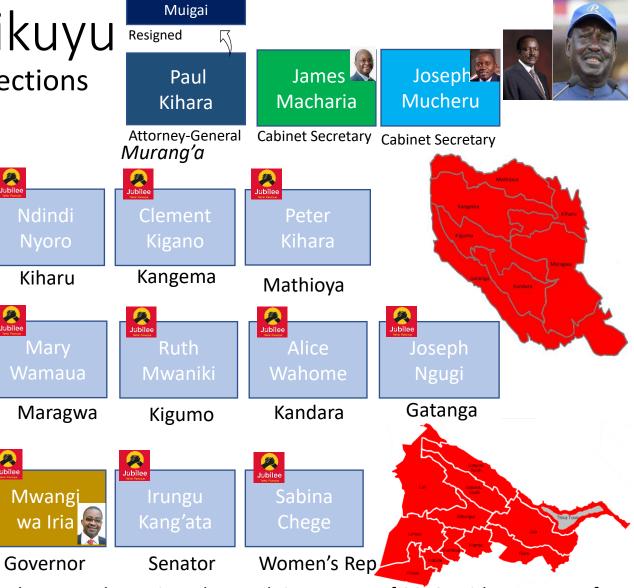
Patrick

Thika Town

Women's Rep

IND

2017: General Elections



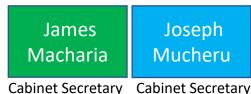
Kenyatta and Ruto win a second victory, now as Jubilee, over Odinga and Kalonzo. In the region, the result is a repeat of 2013, with every seat for Kenyatta/Ruto by huge margins. Waititu beats Kabogo as Governor but wa Iria defeats Jamleck Irungu. However, in a shock move, the court nullifies Kenyatta and Ruto's victory, forcing a second presidential election in August, which Odinga boycotts, ensuring the same result. The cabinet is reconstituted only in Jan 2018. Githu Muigai resigns, to be succeeded by a fifth Kiambu A-G, Paul Kihara. In March 2018, growing violence and alienation leads to a personal handshake between Kenyatta and Odinga which is to change Kenya's path once more.



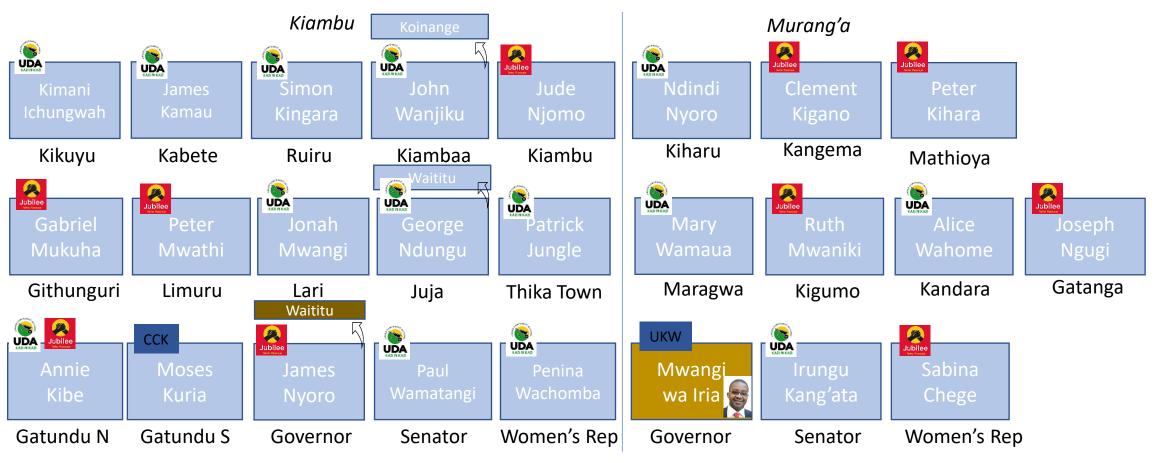


Paul Kihara 2020-22: New Alliances

Attorney-General







Kenyatta's handshake with Odinga drives a wedge between him and his Deputy. Ruto strikes out alone, determined to succeed his boss in 2022. As Moi did with him 20 years before, Kenyatta gradually brings his strongest opponents (then the Kikuyu, now the Luo community) into favour, waiting to the last moment to confirm that his preferred successor is not his deputy but opposition leader Odinga. In the meantime, Ruto has built a populist political machine in Mount Kenya which outmatches the absentee Kenyatta's, and the majority of leaders at lower levels openly back him. In 2020, Pro-Ruto Waititu is impeached. Two by-election in Juja and Kiambu in 2021 confirm Ruto's dominance.