

**The Post-Election Violence in Kenya  
The Jua Kali and the Policy Failures of the Elites**

**Yuki Asaka**

**Abstract**

*This article investigates the reason behind the violence after the 2007 election in Kenya. Assuming that its neo-liberal policies and incapability of controlling the informal sector led to one of the world's highest cases of inequality, this paper investigates why the Kenyan government has continuously failed in its policies concerning the informal sector, and how ethnic unrest is connected to the issue. This paper analyses Kenyan macro-economic reform and the empowerment approach, which the government has pursued in its informal sector policy. Furthermore, it examines the reasons behind political failures in connection with ethnocentrism, using social capital theories.*

---

**INTRODUCTION**

**KENYA BEFORE AND AFTER THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION ON DECEMBER 27<sup>TH</sup>, 2007**

The December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2007 general and presidential election became a historic event in Kenya and in Africa for the violence that followed, which resulted in the deaths of 1600 people and the displacement of 60,000 people. Kenya enjoyed its position of a leading figure of Africa and, as an outcome, the unrest after its presidential election challenged both national and international society in its understanding of the economic success and the political stability in Kenya. The political stability in Kenya was essential in the 1980s and early 1990s when Kenya was forced to adopt the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) in return for receiving development aid from international organizations and from neo-liberal Western nations.<sup>1</sup> Despite two decades of low economic growth, Kenya, with its multi-party democracy, was considered one of the more successful African nations in establishing

---

<sup>1</sup> Neo-Liberalism promotes free market and democracy through international institutions. It predicts that free market will encourage further economic integration among public and private actors in the economy, and that globalization is a positive force. It is argued that it has even made human rights and values into market commodities. (Baylis and Smith: 2005: ch9)

political stability (Seierup 1994: 5) followed by economic growth, at the beginning of the century. This political stability was achieved through the “relatively strong bureaucratic institutions for policy development and management, providing state leaders with considerable ability to intervene in the market and in society”. (Grindle 1999:13) The central government’s concentration of political power, however, nurtured corruption and the dictatorship of Kenyatta and Moi, the first and the second presidents of the nation, respectively. They secured the power of the presidency through constitutional amendments, which granted the president the power to appoint and to dismiss civil servants, power over issues of public security and justice, and power over election and voting rules<sup>2</sup>. (Ibid. 97-98) In the 80s and 90s, Moi’s regime, “one of the two most corrupt [regimes] in Africa” (N’Diaye 2001:141), faced the economic crisis, which brought about the coup attempt in 1982 and numerous other strikes and demonstrations during that period. However, despite the deepening corruption and instability, “Kenya was touted (particularly in the West) as an example of an African economic success story and a showcase for capitalism”. (Ibid. 2001:136)

The election in 2002 gave a symbolic victory to Mwai Kibaki, who promised to fight against corruption and to establish a fair democracy. However, the issue of corruption remained and still is a critical factor in Kenya. (Kenya Review, 2007:16) The election ended the nearly 40-year leadership of KANU<sup>3</sup> and brought the opposition coalition party, NARC,<sup>4</sup> into power. This was “the most significant political event in the history of Kenya since British colonial rule formally ended in December 1963” (Ndegwa 2003:145). It ended Moi’s 24-year dictatorship, and stood as a lesson for other authoritarian states like Cameroon, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. (Ibid. 145) However, Kibaki’s unfulfilled promises to make comprehensive reforms and to fight against corruption still keep “the

---

<sup>2</sup> Kenyatta made 16 amendments, and Moi made 11. For more information, see Grindle, 1999.

<sup>3</sup> Kenya African National Union: the party created by former Mau Mau members, mostly from the Kikuyu tribe, with Kenyatta as its leader. The constitutional amendment in June 1982 made Kenya a one party state and operation of opposition parties illegal, which basically made KANU Kenya’s only legal party until 1992. (Kenya review, 2007, p.8)

<sup>4</sup> NARC (National Rainbow Coalition) is the opposition coalition party against the Moi, led by Mwai Kibaki since 2002.

legacy of the bureaucratic-executive state<sup>5</sup> [...] intact". (Branch & Cheeseman 2006:28) Moreover, the Kibaki regime has further extended the tribal monopoly of the Kikuyu within the central government, causing ethnic tensions to spill over and to contribute to the violence following the election of December 27<sup>th</sup> 2007.

As a consequence of continuing corruption, the World Bank suspended aid and the IMF delayed loans to Kenya in 2006. However, Kenya has achieved an annual 6% growth in GDP since 2002, and the growing middle class has created a hospitable political and economic atmosphere for foreign investors, leading to an increase in foreign import. Kenya's growth is mainly explained by governmental stability and sufficient infrastructure. More specifically, a stable government obedient to Western demands has been important for both the Western neo-liberalism agenda and for Kenya to achieve economic development – a situation that has ultimately allowed Kenya to serve as a role model to fellow African nations.

In spite of the role-model status that Kenya enjoyed, the violence following the 2007 elections indicates that there were problems lurking beneath the surface of a seemingly successful case of democracy and liberalism. The violence was concentrated in the slums and in the informal sectors of both rural and urban areas, where people did not hesitate to show their anger and frustration against the Kibaki regime and his tribal fellows, the Kikuyu<sup>6</sup>. The major unrest was reported in Eldoret, Rift valley; Kisumu, West Kenya; and Nairobi. The fact that most of the assailants and victims were both from the slums in Nairobi and part of the rural poor indicates not only a growing inequality, but also a complete division between the poor, which have been marginalized while Kenya achieved economic growth and political stability, and the economic elites.

---

<sup>5</sup> Kenya's bureaucracy has a powerful combination of executives and provincial administration strengthening and legitimating their positions continuously. For more information, see Branch and Cheeseman, 2006.

<sup>6</sup> Kikuyu is the largest ethnic group in Kenya, which accounts for about 20% of the population. They have been the central actors in the political arena since independence due to their dominant role in the independence movement and to the first president, Kenyatta, who was a Kikuyu.

**THE GROWING ECONOMY AND THE ENLARGING GAP BETWEEN THE POOR AND THE RICH**

Large parts of the foreign media together with Kenyan political elites were quick to conclude that the reason for the violence was ethnic conflict. They focused on the unfulfilled promises of Kibaki regarding power sharing and on the power monopoly of the Kikuyu tribe in the Cabinet. The media reported on the degree of violence in the slums and informal sectors, but did not mention that the rich middle class was not directly affected by the violence, nor did they focus on the growing disparity between the rich and the poor. Despite this concentration on ethnic cleavages, local Kenyan journalists were able to report the truth behind the violence. They wrote that the Western media:

*"failed to see that the main reason for the upheaval was not that one ethnic group wanted to forcibly take over the presidency from another ethnic group, but that Kenyans perceived the elections to be unfair and rigged. More importantly, they failed to realize that the root causes of the violence had more to do with Kenya's economic and political reality than it did with ethnic chauvinism -- although all three are linked." (Warah<sup>7</sup> 2008: 7<sup>th</sup> paragraph)*

Kenya's economic and political reality is the growing gap between the rich and the poor, burgeoning slums, an unresolved unemployment rate and higher dependency on the informal sector, which has developed alongside the 6% annual economic growth. The liberal policies of Kenya, enforced by the World Bank and by the IMF, created a welcoming environment for foreign direct investment (FDI) and it encouraged the privatisation of state-owned enterprises. For example, Kenya's Export Processing Zones (EPZs) were established in 1990 with the objective to promote export-oriented industrial investment, job generation, technology transfer, development of backward linkages and diversification of products and market. Government policies were established to offer fiscal, physical and procedural incentives to facilitate investors' operation, seeking an increase in FDI. (KHRC 2007) Although the performance of EPZs in the 1990s is observed to be rather poor (Mireri 2000:149-150), the government under Kibaki has strengthened its liberal policies by formulating the Private Sector Development Strategy to support the EPZs, small and medium-sized enterprises and entrepreneurs. (KEPSA 2005)

---

<sup>7</sup> Rasna Warah, a columnist with Kenya's Daily Nation newspaper, works as an editor for the United Nations.

Despite Kenya's achievement of 5% annual GDP growth in the period 2004- 2006, the percentage of population living *under* the poverty line increased from 40.3% in 1994 to 45.9% in 2006 and was above 50% during the late 1990s (KNBS statistics). Although the percentage of absolute poverty had lessened by 2006 in comparison to the late 1990s, the number of the population living in poverty had not decreased. As a consequence, the number of slums and their attendant populations had in fact increased. The growing number of slums is one among many of the negative consequences of the neo-liberal policies Kenya has been following. These policies have resulted in a growing informal sector and a growing population of impoverished citizens. The slums - especially Kibera<sup>8</sup> and Mathare - the two largest slums in Nairobi, became the main battlefields of the violence following the 2007 election. The unrest could be understood as a reflection of the anger and frustration of people who were forced to cope with inequality, which, seen from a neo-liberal perspective, is "the inevitable *short-term* effect of the market-led growth process." (Petras and Veltmeyer 2002: 21) How long the neo-liberalists assume the *short-term* to last is however unclear and the 40-year existence of the informal sector in Kenya, largely based in the slums, should not be dissimulated as a *short-term* effect behind Kenya's economic growth. Since independence, the Kenyan government has been conscious of the informal sector and has tried to reduce its size together with foreign aid assistance. However, it has consistently failed to control the growing slums and informal sectors, which has also meant growing poverty and inequality. Bearing in mind that both inequality and ethnic rivalry played a role in the post-election violence, this article investigates why the government has continuously failed in its policies concerning the informal sector, and how this is connected to ethnic unrest. By investigating these problems, this paper explains some of the reasons of the post-election violence.

---

<sup>8</sup> Kibera is the biggest slum in Nairobi with a population estimated between 600,000 and 1.2 million (the population of Nairobi is about 3 million).

**INEQUALITY, REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY AND NEO-LIBERALISM IN KENYA**

Entangled in a dependent relationship with foreign donors, Kenya followed the neo-liberal policies prescribed by the World Bank, the IMF, and the WTO, including structural adjustment programmes. The principles of neo-liberal economics fall under the concept of neo-liberal capitalism, which promulgates the modernization theory of development—that economic growth will solve poverty, and help to achieve electoral representative democracy.

This paper assumes that the largest flaw of neo-liberal capitalism is “the inevitable *short-term* effect” of inequality and class division, which can also be observed in Kenyan capitalism, which was established by the British during the colonial period. Indeed, Western capitalist nations ensured that their capitalist system would survive before the postcolonial period began, in order to maintain and increase their status as the centres of global political-economy. (Sennet 2006, Robotham 2005, Robbins 2005, Petras and Veltmeyer 2002) Under neo-liberal auspices, the global and national class divisions are

*“largely and increasingly polarized; peasants and workers are exploited as never before; the number of impoverished grows; and above all, directing the process, is an omnipresent, arrogant and intrusive Euro-American empire with incredible resources but few saving graces of virtues.” (Petras and Veltmeyer 2002:163)*

From this perspective, the marginalized in Kenyan capitalism suffer from both global and national inequality. Inequality is a crucial issue both nationally and globally because it “leads to discrimination and exclusion, thereby becoming not only a matter of social injustice, but also a matter of human rights and governance.” (SID 2004:iii) Furthermore, although the argument is still controversial,

*“There is growing evidence now that greater equity is associated with faster economic growth. It is now widely believed that lower inequality can create faster growth (...) What matters for poverty reduction is not the rate of growth but the distribution corrected rate of growth.” (Ibid. 4)*

This paper does not analyse the relationship between inequality and economic growth; however, it acknowledges a relationship between the two and believes the assumption regarding inequality as one of the worst vices of neo-liberal capitalism. Furthermore, it signals how the growing inequality leads to unstable governance and a rise in the crime rate, factors which disturb the social and economic

development of a nation. In this sense, “it is significant that the top three most unequal countries are from Africa; two of which have been involved in social and political conflicts [Sierra Leone and the Central African Republic].” (ibid. 7)

This paper briefly analyses why representative electoral election is a key issue in neo-liberalism and why its failure could lead to instability. This highlights the importance of the 2007 election in Kenya for both the elites and the marginalized. Considering that SAP demanded democracy and human rights in return for foreign aid, the paper argues that representative electoral democracy is a strategic ideology for neo-liberal capitalism to legitimate inequity and class-biased processes, especially in the developing and underdeveloped countries. Western countries are excluded from this understanding of the relationship between democracy and neo-liberal capitalism because they have been the promoters of democracy and have achieved democracy from within, compared to developing countries where democracy has been imposed from the outside. Fair electoral democracy is indispensable for neo-liberal capitalism because the notion of “democracy” itself infers the fulfilment of human rights. Thus, even if a nation does not protect and promote human rights, simply declaring itself to be a “democratic” nation, or, more specifically, maintaining the image of electoral democracy ensures that people/citizens believe their human rights are secure. As the UNDP claims, “democracy builds the institutions needed for the fulfilment of human rights.” (UNDP 2000:59) It is important to note that although there are many types of democracy, it is hoped that democracy as an ideology overall promotes human rights and that therefore the word ‘democracy’ contains hope for development and the fulfilment of human rights.

However, there are nations that underwent changes of regime during the wave of democratisation in the 1980s-1990s, as a reaction to both the end of the Soviet Union and SAP. In most of these nations, democratisation did not occur from within, but was a result of international pressure. Hence, these countries have the trappings of democracy, usually in the form of elections, but cannot be said to fully fulfil basic democratic qualifications—in the sense of majority rule or people’s participation. Yet the Western neo-liberalists are eager to acknowledge the *form* of democracy in developing nations, which blinds people to the negative consequences of neo-liberal capitalism. Indeed, Kenya falls into this category: embracing a form of electoral democracy, but maintaining a *de facto* authoritarian regime functioning in favour of certain tribal and elite interests.

Furthermore, the conditionality of democracy gave political elites legitimacy because the mere ability to receive loans implicitly meant approval for being on the right track to democracy. Van de Walle (1997:32) points this out clearly:

*"We can expect that political leaders [in Africa] will adapt to changing international circumstances by seeking new methods for obtaining or retaining power. In an international context where liberal ideas are hegemonic, all political leaders – regardless of their true beliefs and objectives- will attempt to cloak themselves in the legitimating mantle of democracy and make themselves available as candidates for elected office."*

Consequently, a form of democracy—of which electoral democracy has been the most commonly implemented—was needed by both neo-liberal capitalism, to veil its responsibility for widening inequality, and by political leaders, to legitimize their regimes. Nonetheless, this charade works only when political leaders are capable of convincing their nation that they are carrying out fair elections. Because Kenya failed to do so in 2007, violence broke out immediately following the electoral process.

Adopting this view, this paper assumes that the violence in Kenya would not have occurred had the neo-liberal capitalist mechanism favoured a fair and transparent electoral representative democracy—as it does in most Western countries. In other words, the lack of fair and transparent electoral representative democracy revealed the vices of the liberal economy and of the political elites. Thus, the violence following the presidential election in Kenya is not a case unique to that country alone, but may occur in any neo-liberal capitalist country led by corrupt political elites, where a fair and transparent electoral system is yet to be established. This includes countries like Egypt, Uganda, and Malawi. The question is: why did the violence flare up in Kenya at this particular time, especially as electoral fraud is nothing new for the Kenyan government?

In the last section of analysis, this paper applies two concepts of social capital in order to address this question: first, social capital as network and civic participation, as articulated by Putnam, and second, social capital as trust, as formulated by Fukuyama. This analysis explains the irrelevance of these concepts to the case of Kenyan development and concludes that the complex (dis)connection between the elite and the informal sector, which can be captured via social capital theory, is the reason for political failure, while simultaneously ensuring the continuity of a corrupt regime.



**CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION: THE INFORMAL SECTOR, JUA KALI AND THE SLUMS**

In this paper, the term 'informal sector' is used interchangeably with the word 'slum' and 'Jua Kali'. It does not distinguish the different activities within the informal sector because the focus of this paper is not concerned with micro-level issues, such as "different demands in the nature and level of skill requirements", or different income opportunities and state regulation and control. (Barasa & Kaabwe 2001:332) Therefore, differentiating the multiple activities in the Kenyan informal sector is not appropriate for this paper and the criticism such as "studies which draw generalizations about the informal sector, without contextualizing the activities in question, may end up concealing more than they reveal" (ibid. 332) would be inappropriate. The main focus of this paper is to understand the relationship between the political failure of the central government in remedying the growing informal sector and the violence following the election; therefore, it does not delve further into the plurality of activities in Kenya's informal sector, such as:

*shoe-making and repair; street hawking; tailoring; hair-caring (salons); traditional medicines and healing; matatu (taxi) businesses; textile trading, especially second-hand clothes dealers; grocery and food kiosks; and skilled occupational activities such as carpentry, motor mechanics, electrical/electronics and masonry, among others (ibid. 2001:332).*

The term 'Jua Kali' was accepted and re-discovered by the Kenyan government in the *Development Plan 1989-1993*, in 1988. (King 1996:14) It originally "refer[ed] to hard work done predominantly by male blacksmiths and metalworkers out of doors, in the open air," (ibid. 24) as derived from its meaning of "hot sun" in Swahili. However, "the term broadened to stand not just for a particular form of micro-enterprise, but for a Kenyan/African version of capital accumulation to be contrasted with that of the multinationals or Kenyan/Asians". (Ibid. 24-25) The term was then used interchangeably with the term 'informal sector' by international organizations and NGOs to distinguish it from the private and the public sectors. The term also includes small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) as well as the self-employed in development policy dialogue—which is not necessarily informal in terms of legal status. However, the "high-level policy makers in Kenya regard self-employment, Jua Kali and micro-enterprises as 'manifestations of underdevelopment, and not as a sector to which Kenya's future is inextricably linked". (Ibid. 41) The Kenyan government considers these economic actors to collectively constitute an isolated sector that remains "much more part of the fragmented world of self-help (*harambee*) than they are of any partnership with government, with the formal private sector or with other sections of a self-confident micro-enterprise constituency." (King 1996:203) Therefore this paper uses the term Jua Kali interchangeably with the term informal sector.

By understanding the causes behind the violence following the 2007 election, this paper hopes to cast Kenya as an example of countries facing large inequalities, which only offer an illusion of democracy. This paper does not seek to justify fair and transparent electoral democracy as a virtue *per se*, because it could serve modern capitalism to conceal class division and inequality. However, as already discussed above, the paper recognizes democracy as one of the possibilities towards achieving human rights. The following section analyses the reasons why Kenya failed in its policies towards the informal sector followed by a discussion of the role of ethnicity in political development.

*The Macro-Economic Approach to Reform the Jua Kali Sector*

King (1996: xiv), the leading scholar on the Jua Kali, has argued that the concept of 'informal sector' "was originally developed in 1972 as part of recommendations of a World Employment Programme mission" in Kenya. This report was significant because the ILO "recognized that the informal sector was here to stay and to expand, whatever policies the government did or did not adopt." It further acknowledged that "[the informal sector] also was the provider of employment, goods and services for lower-income groups, for which there was no alternative source of supply." (ibid. 112) As predicted, the informal sector in Kenya remains a powerful economic sector despite governmental intervention and NGO's projects targeted on this sector. The activities of the informal sector are diverse, but a limitation in size, resources and education/traineeship restricted their activities to certain types of businesses (King 1977, 1996) which left the sector highly competitive despite low income and scarce resources. Although the growth of the informal sector was prominent only after the economic stagnation in the 1980s (Grindle 1999:7), it has been a national policy issue since 1972, when the ILO published its research paper concerning the informal sector in Kenya. The government policies aimed at addressing the Jua Kali sector could be split into three policy phases: negative intrusion, passive indifference, and positive intervention (Barasa & Kaabwe 2001:334).

Despite the ILO recommendation to simplify the trade licensing system to build "much closer ties between formal and informal sector through subcontracting," the Kenyan government maintained its negative intrusion and passive indifference policies during the 1970s. This was no longer possible after the economic stagnation in the 1980s, when the number of slums increased and the poverty grew. Following the growth of the informal sector during this period, the government's *Development Plan 1989-1993*, gave special attention to the informal sector, where it first introduced the term 'Jua Kali' in the official documents. (ibid. 334-5) In the plan, "the relative neglect of the Jua Kali sector that had prevailed over time was acknowledged; the enormous potential contribution of the sector to job

creation and income distribution was affirmed; and [outlined] specific policies for its growth and development.” (ibid. 334-5)

This Development Plan was written in collaboration with the ILO and the UNDP for a project on entrepreneurship, which began in 1987. The collaboration was:

*“broadened, in 1989, into a small enterprise development policy project, and was organized in a highly participatory manner, involving all the relevant ministries, the aid agencies, representatives of industry and commerce, and with targeted seminars and workshops focused on small-scale exporters, the banking sector, NGOs and many other interested parties.” (King 1996:15)*

The results of this collaboration were introduced into the official plan in 1988 and in three volumes of a strategy paper having the common title ‘Small Enterprise Development in Kenya’. (Ibid. 15) As research back in 1986 had already concluded, “macro-economic policies aimed at the economy as a whole, such as the strategy to raise farm productivity and income, lower tariffs and encourage the substitution of labour for machinery” stimulated the informal sector and encouraged the growth of small enterprises. (Ibid. 1996:14) The reform, once implemented, following the strategy papers in 1989, had a “positive impact on the informal sector”. (Ibid. 17) The reform consisted of “import liberalization, relaxation of price controls, (and) the deregulation of interest rates.” (Ibid. 17-18) Despite the fact that the donors that had committed to the reform, such as the ILO, the World Bank, the GTZ, USAID and other international NGOs, argued that there had been a “positive impact,” others observed that “[w]hile reform of the macro-economic framework, like exchange rate and interest rate policy, were actually implemented, most of the reforms in the policy towards the urban informal sector failed to go beyond intention.” (Ibid. 18)

These contradictory observations are due to the fact that the willingness of international organizations and governments to do something about the informal sector failed to draw “a single recommendation in which the Jua Kali themselves have to take the initiative”. (Ibid. 20-21) Therefore, while the reform was carried out with some positive impact, the Jua Kali was considered to be a passive actor, a perception that persisted despite the fact that President Moi himself had encouraged the informal sector to build associations and form self-help groups as far back as 1985.

Indeed, government policies promoting the Jua Kali associations helped Jua Kali to be “the focus of a number of donor projects and of international and national NGOs attempts to do something about

enlarging the current technology frontier on the informal sector". (Ibid. 30) However, the different attitudes of the central government and of the donors towards the Jua Kali associations increased the volatility and anxiety of the informal sector. The Kenyan government recognizes Jua Kali associations only as small-scale enterprises—squatters on governmental or vacant land without title—and "hence cannot put up a permanent building from which to operate". (Ibid. 32) The government also claims that the "temporary structures do not meet the standards required both by local by-laws and under the Public Health Act."<sup>9</sup> (Ibid. 32) To sum up, the Kenyan government on the one hand encouraged the informal sector through macro-economic policies, but on the other hand it limited their business space. This ambiguous government attitude is entrenched in corruption and land issues and has led to the demolition of many slum blocks. (Ibid. 34)

*The Education and Training Approach to Reform the Jua Kali Sector*

Parallel to the macro-economic reform approach to the informal sector was the bottom-up (or the empowerment approach) focusing on education and vocational training within the informal sector. In 1985, the 8-4-4 reform was implemented, shifting the school curriculum to include eight years of basic, four years of secondary and four years of university education. The new curriculum "was concerned with skills, knowledge, expertise and personal qualities for a growing modern economy". (King 1996:164) It emphasized the need of trained manpower in both self-employed and paid employment in the country. (Ibid. 164) The educational reform encouraged self-employment and entrepreneurship by requiring vocational training institutions where Kenya formerly depended on the foreign donors, NGOs or local entrepreneurs—this included the Jua Kali sector. (ibid. 177) In the area of education and training, Kenya "establish[ed] 10 *harambee* (self-help) institutes of technology and some 300 basic-craft level Village Polytechnics" in the 1970s. (Bennell 1984:51) However, these facilities were concentrated in urban areas where "less than 15 percent of central government recurrent and capital expenditure on training was specifically allocated to these rurally oriented training institutions". (Ibid)

---

<sup>9</sup> Kenya 1989a is the Small Enterprise Development in Kenya towards the Year 2000 Part One referred to in King 1996.

The empowerment approach to the informal sector turned out to be based on a wrong assumption. The Government and the NGOs sought to ensure that “the sector consists of people who are school dropouts with low academic qualifications, and who only resort to joining the sector after failing to qualify for the formal academic or vocational route.” (Barasa & Kaabwe 344:2001) The political elites, entangled in the colonial administrator legacy, and the development agencies viewed the Jua Kali as a sector “trapped in a culture of poverty that perpetuates illiteracy and apathy and fails to teach the skills required to ‘get ahead’ in a modern economy”. (Winder 1991: 35) This may also explain the policies addressed to the informal sector, looking down on them as if they were incapable of making a change by themselves. Contrarily, the adult literacy data in Nairobi (where male and female literacy rates are both 87.1%)<sup>10</sup> confirms the assumptions that “undereducated” or people of “low academic qualification” are not eligible, at least in the informal sectors in Nairobi. Winder (Ibid.) even argues that many people in the informal sectors are conscious of their unstable status, and therefore keen on the political developments of the nation. In short, they listen to the radio and read newspapers and are generally more aware of both national and international politics than policy makers believe.

Therefore, the education reform and the concentration of vocational training, based as it was on a wrong assumption, did not lead to the diminishing of the informal sector or a decrease in the slum population. Ironically, it has been found that “the [Jua Kali] sector appears to be self-sustaining in terms of skills development.” (Barasa & Kaabwe 2001:340) Furthermore, some scholars argue that the informal sector, which the government tried to abolish through its empowerment policies, “should be marketed as an alternative mode of vocational training and not as a dumping ground for academic rejects” (ibid. 350). They argued that the informal sector may be “an increasingly viable alternative mode of vocational training to the formal sector, not only in Kenya but in most other African countries.” (ibid. 351)

---

<sup>10</sup> Data from Ministry of Planning and National Development (2007)

The failure of policy to reduce the informal sector and slums further worsened conditions by continuous clearance of the sector, which increased distrust of political elites throughout the sector.

The Kenyan government explained the failure of reforms in the following ways:

*"(1) that it is a result of racial discrimination under colonialism; (2) that it stems from African urban poverty; (3) that it is a product of Kenya's heavy international debt burden; (4) that it is intensified by structural adjustment programmes imposed by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF); and (5) that it has been worsened by inadequate foreign aid." (Werlin, 2006:40)*

By drawing these seemingly persuasive points, the government attempted to reduce its responsibility for the failure of the projects targeting the Jua Kali, and distract attention from its own inability to control the informal sector. Werlin (Ibid), however, further argues that, while all these points are valid, "none gets to the crux of the problem, which has to do with the low quality of governance or the lack of social energy."

#### **CORRUPTION AND THE FAILURE OF POLITICS**

##### *Kenyan Social Capital in Terms of Networking and Civic Participation*

As noted above, Werlin argues that low quality of governance and a lack of social energy are the core problems contributing to the failure of the reform policy of the informal sector in Kenya—to a greater degree than the external problems listed above. The low quality of governance means high corruption and a lack of social energy, in other words, a lack of "capacity for governance." Hence, social capital in the meaning of 'trust and network' in Kenya seems appropriate to illustrate the problem. There are two main streams of social capital theory, which are dissimilar when applied to the political development in Kenya. The argument represented by Putnam is that social capital is defined as social networking and the level of civic participation. (DeFilippis 2002:791) A critic of Putnam summarizes that "[s]ocial capital promotes economic growth, health and well-being, educational attainment and just about anything else anybody would care about". (Ibid. 791) From this point of view, Putnam's work contains some political significance, but it justifies the "blame the victim" perspective, which is "if you are poor, or your neighbourhood is poor, it is because you have not networked enough and have not constructed enough social capital." (Ibid. 794)

Interestingly, neither the theories of Putnam nor those of his critics could satisfactorily explain the failure of development in Kenya. In Kenya, networking at the political elite level does exist and it is driven by political interests. Theoretically, this fact should build the capacity of governance, whereas the social capital may also explain the growing middle class and the However, the social capital theory

YUKI ASAKA – POST-ELECTION VIOLENCE IN KENYA

fails to explain the actual incapability of the policies concerning the Jua Kali sector, even if the high social capital as defined by Putnam can also be observed in Kenya.

The strong network among elites consists of two main characteristics: ethnicity and a political system bearing the stamp of authoritarianism persisting since the British colonial period. Since independence in 1963, Kenya's political power has been concentrated among members of the Kikuyu tribe, despite the fact that they suffered most under colonialism. (Klugman and Neyapti 1999:15) The Kikuyu are the largest tribal group, comprising up to 21%<sup>11</sup> of the Kenyan population and, from whose ranks, the famous Mau Mau<sup>12</sup> was formed in the fight for independence, deriving morale from their erstwhile collective oppression. The networking and the bond within tribes were strengthened under British colonial power, which undermined traditional authority. They "laid the basis for divisions and government authoritarianism" and drew the administrative boundaries according to ethnic lines, which deepened the ethnic divisions. (Ibid. 16) Despite the cleavages created by the British administrators during colonialism, the "attainment of independence and the charisma of the first Kenyan president provided sufficient basis for overall national consensus, at least initially." (Klugman and Neyapti 1999:17) However, Kenyatta's "Forgive and Forget" policy maintained a "remarkable continuity" from the British era and eventually the already disrupted national unity fractured and ethnicity defined again the political power divisions. (Branch and Cheeseman, 2006:11) For example, the Kenyan bureaucracy, which was structured by the powerful combination of "the strength and legitimacy of the executive and the capacity of the provincial administration" (Ibid), was consolidated by the Kikuyu to fortify Kenyatta's own power— Kenyatta being a member of the Kikuyu tribe. (Leonard 1991:119)

Kenyatta's successor, Moi, who came from the Kalenjin minority ethnic group, was opposed to the ethnic division. Hence, the power concentration of the Kikuyu waned (at least in the political sphere)

---

<sup>11</sup> Africa Research Bulletin - Political Social and Cultural Series, Volume 44 Number 12 December 1st-31st 2007 Kenya Disputed Election

<sup>12</sup> Mau Mau is a radical sect of Kikuyu, which emerged during the independence movement. They fought for land and their focus was on Kikuyu independence rather than that of the entire nation, and it is said that they fought more against the Africans from different ethnicity than the British settlers

under his regime. (Klugman and Neyapti 1999:51) Instead, power was further concentrated on the president by amendments to the constitution. Under the Moi regime, the Kenyan constitution “was repeatedly amended to correspond to the political goals of governing elites and to enhance the power of the state vis-à-vis society.” (Grindle 1999:97) As already mentioned in the introduction, the third Kenyan President, Mwai Kibaki failed to effectively address corruption, which was virtually institutionalised during Moi’s 24-year dictatorship. Moreover, Kibaki has appointed fellow Kikuyu and members of related ethnic groups to positions within the cabinet and senior civil service, securing his and his tribe’s elites’ power with the so-called “Mount Kenya mafia”. (Nicholl 2008: 1) Furthermore, “[t]here have also been claims of a resolve among Kikuyus not to allow any other ethnic group to take power again. The fact that KANU leader Uhuru Kenyatta, who had been the official opposition leader during Kibaki’s first term, decided to support Kibaki gave the impression that Kikuyu were determined to stick together”. (Ibid) The apparent Kikuyu-centred structure of the central government and the policies allowing inequality to grow encouraged the violence against the Kikuyu following the election. In sum, the social capital in the form of networking is extremely high at the political level, especially among the Kikuyu, but it does not promote the well being of the non-elite Kenyans—including the Kikuyu.

Kenyan social capital, in terms of civic participation, is high at both the local level (represented by the self-help movement since independence) and at the national level (represented by the high voting rate despite a badly organized electoral system). Furthermore, the fact that the number of Jua Kali associations now exceeds 400 since its encouragement in the 1980s, demonstrates the capability of networking and the eagerness to participate in local, Kenyan socio-political activities. (King 1996:32) Seierup (1994:17) observes that active networking among the Jua Kali have shifted away from traditional kin and community networks. He analyses that the new networking is organized according to “their wish for upward mobility to the higher economic echelons of the small town economy, but the size of their capital constrains these ambitions”. Jua Kali associations “form the core of those who fain the most from the NGO-offered business courses”. (Ibid. 17) As one can see, social capital defined in terms of networking and civic participation is strong in both the political and local levels in Kenya. Hence, Kenyan society confirms the criticism directed at Putnam that his social capital approach does not take power relations, e.g. gender, racism, and class division, into consideration. (De Filippis 2002: 794)



*Kenyan Social Capital in Terms of Trust*

The second influential definition of social capital is given by Fukuyama (1995: 26), who defines it as

*“a capability that arises from the prevalence of trust in a society or in certain parts of it. It can be embodied in the smallest and most basic social group, the family, as well as the largest of all groups, the nation, and in all the other groups in between. Social capital differs from other forms of human capital insofar as it is usually created and transmitted through cultural mechanisms like religion, traditions, or historical habit.”*

The focus on education, which is connected to the empowerment of the informal sector, is intensely connected to social capital together with the human capital (education) concept. Although the theory itself was paramount in the 1990s, the initiatives and programmes that are focused on local and community-based organization have departed from the Basic Needs Programmes of the 1960s and 1970s. (Mayer and Rankin 2002:805) The two crucial characteristics of trust-building programmes are, first, “their claims of ‘solidarity,’ ‘empowerment,’ and ‘inclusion,’” and second, “each of these approaches to poverty alleviation advocates a specifically entrepreneurial role for the marginal and disadvantaged.” (Ibid. 806)

As already discussed, during the 1990s this particular approach to the alleviation of slum growth and of the informal sector failed in Kenya. However, the reasons for this failure lie not only with the irrelevant assumptions made by policy-makers and by the NGOs, but also with this particular type of social capital in the informal sector - the *lack* of trust. According to Fukuyama, “[t]rust is the expectation that arises within a community of regular, honest, and cooperative behaviour, based on commonly shared norms, on the part of other members of that community.” (Fukuyama 1995: 26) This definition is more or less the same as the notion of “trust” used in conventional conversation. Despite the fact that the networking and civic-participant type of social capital is strong in Kenya, it is not accompanied by trust. This is because “[t]rust is not necessary for cooperation” and “[g]roups can be formed at anytime based on self-interest and group formation is not culture-dependent”. (Ibid. 26) This case is true for the Kenyan Jua Kali associations, in which “members of such associations said they could not trust each other sufficiently to continue joint efforts.” (Winder 1991: 51) It is common that a leader of an association would keep donor support for him/her-self.

On the political-elite level, a rather higher trust within the same ethnicity tends to repel trust among different ethnicities. This is because trust is culturally and historically determined in Kenya. The case already mentioned above, in which Uhuru Kenyatta supported Kibaki, is a good example of

ethnocentric trust in Kenyan politics, where social capital helps the convergence of political power to a certain group instead of helping the development of society at large. The Kikuyu-centred central government has brought Kenya to the point where “[p]oliticians and officials no longer trusted one another, with the result that authority within the bureaucracy and between the central government and the city council no longer [was] delegated with any expectation of implementation.” (Werlin 2006: 39) To sum up, the high networking and trust among politicians, especially the Kikuyu elite, has enabled them to secure their power and individual interests, while the high networking but low trust among local Kenyans has been helpless in bettering their situations and in demanding effective policy implementation. Therefore, the argument pointing to a lack of social capital does not seem to explain the political inability in Kenya, but rather the disparity in social capital between the elites and the locals—which also corresponds to the inequality in economic capital—leads to a deadlock of policy implementation with respect to the slums and to the informal sectors.

#### CONCLUSION

The elections in 2007 were not the first instance when Kenyan citizens experienced fraudulent and illegal actions of their politicians. The elections in 1992, 1997, and 2002 were equally unfair and “characterized by serious and routine acts of repression, electoral fraud and other crimes, perpetrated by state-security agencies and politicians of the then ruling party and opposition counterparts and outlawed informal gangs and militias”. (KHRC 2008:5) What triggered the violence after the election in 2007 was the combination of growing inequality due to policy failures in connection with corruption and ethnic chauvinism. The victory of NARC in 2002 gave people the “hope that the new government can deliver the country from economic malaise, extreme corruption, and ethnic conflict; ...that it will install rights-enhancing governance which, ultimately, can create the conditions for alleviating poverty”. (Ndegwa 2003:154) The government’s failure in the wake of the recent Mungeki crisis<sup>13</sup> increased the fear and hatred against the Kikuyu. The 2007 election was a chance for the people to

---

<sup>13</sup>Mungeki is a group of ethnic Kikuyu militants inspired by the Mau Mau. They are believed to be linked to high-profile politicians and are blamed for revenge murders in the central region. For more information see <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6685393.stm>

make their voice heard and thus "expectations of a fair contest had been high on all sides". (Nicholl 2008: 2) Therefore, the failure of processing a fair and transparent election easily triggered the violence. The fact that the political elites were not targeted in the violence is the result of the isolation of political elites from those dependent on the informal sector, which has been analysed in this paper through the employment of social capital concepts.

Growing inequality and ethnic chauvinism connected with political corruption will continue to fuel popular unrest, erupting in violence if fair and transparent elections fail. However, violence does not change the political structure dominated by the elites, especially the Kikuyu elites, because of the isolation between the two groups. To conclude, the violence that occurred following the 2007 election may have been prevented if a fair election were carried out, as mentioned in the argument section. However, the corruption and political elitism that increases public anger, inequality and political impotence, will continue unless the Kenyan political elites acknowledge the marginalized population as an active economic and political factor, and work on decreasing the disparity between the elite, the poor and between the different ethnic groups.

REFERENCES

- Africa Research Bulletin - Economic Financial and Technical Series (2008) "KENYA- Poll Riots Endanger Success" Volume 44 Number 12 December 6th 2007–January 15th 2008, Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Baylis, J. and Smith, S. (2005) *The Globalization of World Politics*. Oxford University Press: Oxford
- Bennell, P. (1984) Occupational Transfer: A Case Study of Craft-Training Policies in Kenya, 1945-1980 *Comparative Education Review*, Vol. 28, No. 1. (Feb.), p. 28-51.
- Branch D. & Cheeseman, N. (2006, March) The Politics of Control in Kenya: Understanding the Bureaucratic Executive State, 1952-78. *Review of African Political Economy*, [http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713443496~db=all~tab=issueslist~branches=33-v3333\(107\)](http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713443496~db=all~tab=issueslist~branches=33-v3333(107)), p. 11- 31.
- Barasa, F.S. & Kaabwe., E.S.M. (2001), Fallacies in Policy and Strategies of Skills Training for the Informal Sector: evidence from the Jua Kali sector in Kenya, *Journal of Education and Work* Vol. 14, No. 3, p. 329 – 353, Routledge: UK
- Central Intelligence Agency (2007). *The World Fact Book – Kenya* [www document]  
URL <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/print/ke.html> (visited 2007, May 22)
- Country Watch (2007) *Kenya Country Review*, Country Watch: USA
- DeFilippis, J. (2002). *Symposium on Social Capital: An Introduction*, Antipode, Blackwell Publishing: Oxford
- Fukuyama, F. (1995). *TRUST – The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*, Hamish Hamilton Ltd: London
- Grindle, M.S. (1999). *Challenging the State-Crisis and Innovation in Latin America and Africa*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge
- Inglehart, R., Lawrence E. Harrison and Samuel P. Huntington ed. (2000): "Culture and Democracy", *Culture Matters: How values Shape Human Progress*, p. 80-97. Basic Books: New York
- KHRC, Kenya Human Rights Commission (2007). *Labour Rights Project: A Case of Corporate Social Responsibility*. [www document]  
URL <http://www.khrc.or.ke/subsubsection.asp?ID=5> (visited 2008, April 28)
- KEPSA-Kenya Private Sector Alliance (2005). *Private Sector Development in Kenya* [www document]  
URL <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTKENYA/Resources/psd.pdf> (visited 2007, May 25)
- King, K. (1996) *Jua Kali Kenya – Change and Development in an Informal Economy 1970-95*, James Currey Ltd: London, EAEP: Nairobi, Ohio University Press: Athens.

YUKI.ASAKA – POST-ELECTION VIOLENCE IN KENYA

Klugman, J., Neyapti, B. and Stewart, F. (1999) CONFLICT AND GROWTH IN AFRICA, Vol. 2: Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, Development Centre of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development: France

Leonard, D. K. (1991) African Successes – Four Public Managers of Kenyan Rural Development. University of California Press: Berkeley, Los Angeles, Oxford.

Mayer, M. and Rankin, K. N. (2002) Social Capital and (Community) Development: A North/South Perspective, Antipode, Blackwell Publishing: Oxford

Mireri, C. (2000) The Impact of Export Processing Zone Development on Employment Creation in Kenya. Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography, 21(2) July, p.149-165.

Ministry of Planning and National Development, (2007) Kenya Fact and figures 2007 Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) [www document]  
URL <http://www.knbs.go.ke/downloads/pdf/factsandfigures.pdf>  
(visited 2008, April 9)

N'Diaye, B. (2001) The Challenge of Institutionalizing Civilian Control – Botswana, Ivory Coast, and Kenya in Comparative Perspective. Lexington Books: New York

Ndegwa, Stephen N. (2003). "KENYA: THIRD TIME LUCKY?", Journal of Democracy Volume 14, Number 3 July. p.145-160.

Nicholl, A. ed. (2008) Violence in Kenya – counting crisis, *Strategic Comments*, Volume [http://www.informaworld.com.zorac.aau.aau.dk/smpp/title~content=t724921302~db=all~tab=issueslist~branches=14-v1414](http://www.informaworld.com.zorac.aau.aau.dk/smpp/title~content=t724921302~db=all~tab=issueslist~branches=14-v1414, Issue 1 March 2008), Issue 1 March 2008 , p.1 – 2.

Petras, J. and Veltmeyer, H. (2002) Globalization Unmasked, Fernwood Publishing: UK

Robbins, Richard H. (2005) Global Problems and Culture of Capitalism, 3rd Edition. Pearson Education, Inc: Boston, New York, San Francisco, Mexico City, Montreal, Toronto, London, Madrid, Munich, Paris, Hong Kong, Singapore, Tokyo, Cape Town, Sydney

Robotham, D. (2005) Culture, Society and Economy – Bringing Production Back in., SAGE Publications: London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi

Seierup, S. (1994) "Small Town Entrepreneurs and their Networks in Kenya", CDR Working Papers 94.1. January. Center for Development Research: Copenhagen

Sennett, R. (2006) The Culture of the New Capitalism, Yale University Press: New Haven and London  
SID - Society of International Development (2004), Pulling Apart : Facts and Figure on Inequality in Kenya, Society of International Development: Nairobi

UNDP (2000), Human Development Report 2000, United Nations Publications: New York URL [http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/hdr\\_2000\\_en.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/hdr_2000_en.pdf)

THE INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES No.1 (2010)

van de Walle, M. B. N. (1997) *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime transitions in comparative perspective*, Cambridge University Press: Cambridge

Warah, R. (14, January 2008) Not ethnic cleansing, but class war, Mail & Guardian online.  
[http://www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?articleid=329586&area=/insight/insight\\_africa/](http://www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?articleid=329586&area=/insight/insight_africa/) [visited, 21 February 2008]

Werlin, H. (2006) The Slums of Nairobi, *World Affairs*; Summer; 169, 1; Academic Research Library p. 39 – 48.

Winder, J. (1991) Interest Group Structure and organization in Kenya's Informal Sector: Cultural Despair or a Politics of Multiple Allegiances?, *Comparative Political Studies* vol. 24 No.1 April. p.31-55. Sage Publications, Inc.