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## Armed violence and poverty in Nairobi: a mini case study for the Armed Violence and Poverty Initiative

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Centre for  
International Cooperation  
and Security

## **Nairobi – a city besieged: the impact of armed violence on poverty and development**

A case study for the Armed Violence and Poverty Initiative  
March 2005

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## **The Armed Violence and Poverty Initiative**

The UK Department for International Development (DFID) has commissioned the Centre for International Cooperation and Security (CICS) at Bradford University to carry out research to promote understanding of how and when poverty and vulnerability is exacerbated by armed violence. This study programme, which forms one element in a broader “Armed Violence and Poverty Initiative”, aims to provide the full documentation of that correlation which DFID feels is widely accepted but not confirmed. It also aims to analyse the processes through which such impacts occur and the circumstances which exacerbate or moderate them. In addition it has a practical policy-oriented purpose and concludes with programming and policy recommendations to donor government agencies.

This report on Nairobi is one of 13 case studies (all of the case studies are available at [www.bradford.ac.uk/cics](http://www.bradford.ac.uk/cics)). This research draws upon secondary data sources including existing research studies, reports and evaluations. The analysis and opinions expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views or policy of DFID or the UK government.

### **The country reports were:**

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## Executive summary

The capital city of Kenya, Nairobi, was selected for research as it experiences high levels of crime, even compared with most African cities of comparable size, and relatively a higher proportion of these crimes are 'violent'. At one level or other, much of this criminal violence can be said to be 'organised', and one vector of the violence is contestation between gangs. There is also a widespread climate of fear that results. At a macro-level the violent organised criminality has come to be perceived as posing a threat to the overall national economy, as well as affecting the livelihoods and well-being of city residents themselves.

### The context of armed violence

As with other cities studied, the sources of armed violence owe much to its origins and its geography. Established only 100 years ago, for most of its life it was planned to provide homes and services for the colonial settlers brought in by the British colonial rulers. As well as commercial and industrial areas, it spawned affluent and dispersed residential suburbs reaching into the mountains to the north and west. No estates were specifically provided for African town dwellers until 1950. They tended to congregate in unofficial 'squatter' slums, with no property or other rights and subject to periodic bulldozing. This pattern was altered only to the extent that the new African business and political elites gravitated to the middle class, formerly exclusively white, suburbs and way of life. Slums abounded, being more or less tolerated though still occasionally bulldozed, as the city trebled in size from 1 million in 1970.

The resulting geographical pattern today is one of slightly denser affluent suburbs with very much inferior estates and vast slums, some adjacent to the suburbs but most in distant parts of a dispersed city. These latter areas now house 2 of the 3 million people and are marginalised and feel politically and economically excluded. This exclusion has intensified in recent years as a result of earlier expansion of education, so that 300,000 primary school leavers and 190,000 secondary descend on the labour market annually. But jobs are almost non-existent as a result of a decade-long observation of prescriptions by international financial institutions, with the resulting decrease in wages, disinvestment and further impoverishment.

In the last decade the pattern of armed violence has evolved in a variety of ways:

- Criminal acts are no longer typically perpetrated by individuals and small groups but by or under the banner of organised gangs, typically with links to groups in business and/or politics.
- Crime is becoming increasingly violent: not just more crimes against the person but robberies, car-jacking etc becoming more often accompanied by physical harm.
- It is carried out with a new degree of **impunity**, an indifference to hurting people or to the prospects of being held to account – a result, in turn, of the corruption in the police and security services and the judiciary.

The major gangs are often based on one slum area or 'location'. Their names are evocative: 'Taliban', 'Army of Embakasi' (or other name of other suburb), the Boys of Baghdad. The most notorious and extensive, *mungiki* ('masses' in the Kikuyu

language), has an overtly populist political image and claims to be a membership organisation on a massive scale. One of the gangs' roles is protection of their area and/or its leaders, who may sometimes be landlords, but that role may involve them in attacks on neighbouring locations. They also provide muscle for political leaders, and have played a part in the political struggle between government and opposition up to the election of an alternative government in 2002. Thus it is simplistic to see violent crime in Nairobi just as a set of isolated acts of criminality, or to try and deal with it solely as a law-and-order issue or in terms of policing. Nor are the patterns to be understood as the desperate acts of survival of excluded individuals or small groups: it is more organised, with links to politics and state institutions; it is couched in ideological terms to do with 'evening up' the inequalities and exclusion; and thrives in the context of corruption.

In addition to the indirect involvement of individuals within government and politics, there has been a clear element of *state violence* in Kenya as a whole including Nairobi. In the 1990s the most dramatic examples of this in Kenya were the 'ethnic clashes' that preceded the elections in 1992 and 1997, which were widely believed to have been started by the previous regime. Less dramatic but systematic repression was familiar in the city.

### **Small arms and light weapons in the context**

Arms have circulated in the city for 50 years, ever since the 'Mau Mau' rebellion against British colonial rule. They have become more widespread since 1990 as guns have circulated through the region from the war in Uganda in the 1980s and from Somalia in the 1990s. One survey (Stavrou, 2002) suggests about 10% of the urban population possess small arms – so they are common but not pervasive. However, guns are not the weapon of choice in the many acts of physical attack. The same survey brings out the extent of violent crime – 18% of residents had been victims at least once in the last year – but in only 14% of attacks on men and 8% on women were guns used; physical force or knives were more common. However, these figures relate just to crimes classified as 'physical attacks on the person'. They understate the overall role of arms as a means of enforcement in such acts as car-jackings, road-blocks, 'tithes' on buses, extortion, and in gang fights.

### **Patterns of armed violence**

The widespread criminal violence and its increasing scale and impunity create a climate of fear. The Intermediate Technology Development Group survey (Stavrou, 2002) recorded that 52% of all respondents said they worried about crime all the time and 35% did so sometimes. There was an overwhelming view that corruption is widespread and underpins the violence (96%). And the resulting attitude was one of a fatalism that nothing can be done. The new government that came to power in early 2003 faces a major challenge in its efforts to change this perception.

This case study argues that the patterns of criminal violence add up in large part to a set of struggles over contested space: between one slum area's 'defenders' and those of a neighbouring location; between landlords' enforcers and those of tenants; between one set of mini-bus operators and their rivals; between gang members and the homes and vehicles of the affluent.

## Impacts of armed violence

One dangerous area probed by surveys mounted as part of this Study suggests that about a quarter of the 10,000 *matatu* (mini-bus) vehicles can expect to be held up in any one year. It is estimated that there is a surcharge of about 25% to cover this risk – an expense that heightens the cost of commuting for the poor who rely on them. Estimates of the loss of valuables taken at gun-point are at \$2m per year; an average loss of \$40 each time it happens to poor people surviving on less than \$1 per day. As well as putting up fares, operators invest in guards and enforcers, which further raises costs but also escalates the violence. Similar extra costs to the poor and escalations of armed violence occur in relation to other areas of contested space and other acts of armed violence: rent increases are enforced by thugs, protection has to be paid for, many people, especially women, are afraid to take the long, dangerous journeys from slum areas to places where work might be found. The bottom line is that the ‘bandit economy’ benefits a few but very much at the expense of the many of Nairobi’s poor.

As well as the direct losses, the violent organised crime in Nairobi also affects the macro-economy, especially in two dimensions. Tourism, Kenya’s largest foreign exchange earner, is always very sensitive to fears of violence. In 1997 in the wake of major clashes in and around Mombasa, the centre of the coastal tourist industry, this event led to a measurable reduction in the number of foreign tourists. There has also been a less clear-cut and more gradual loss due to Kenya’s and especially Nairobi’s image as an unsafe place. The same image seemed likely to affect one other aspect of Nairobi’s economy, when the UN system suggested downgrading Nairobi’s security rating in 2001. The city is host to by far the largest UN headquarters in Africa, even the international HQ of bodies such as the UN Environment Programme. If that were ever to happen there would be a dramatic impact on this presence that has a major multiplier effect on the Kenya economy.

## Introduction

Nairobi, Kenya's capital city, suggested itself for investigation because it is marked by a high levels of crime, even compared with many other African metropolises. Moreover, there is a pattern where a high proportion of the crime is in fact **violent**: theft is not typically burglary but robbery; cars are not just stolen but increasingly hijacked. Even if not always *armed* robbery, use of weapons of some sort is commonplace. Unlike previous patterns of violent crime, the current wave seems to be characterized by a widespread feeling of impunity. Criminals do not simply deprive their victims of their valuables but seem intent on hurting them. People are robbed while in their homes and are harmed regardless of leaving witnesses. Evidence from surveys, some commissioned as part of the Safer Cities Programme of UN-Habitat, worryingly indicates a degree of 'social paralysis' and acceptance in the face of the crime.

Although emanating from the marginalized 'informal' settlements which house the most impoverished two thirds of the population, much of the violent crime is the work of organized groups linked to networks throughout the city and beyond, not simply individual responses of poor and marginalized people. Moreover, one vector of the violence has been conflict, sometimes amounting to small battles, between gangs and larger organisations contesting opportunities for gain that they control or seek to control. There is then both a 'culture' of violence and a political economy of violence, both of which have to be understood.

## 1. The context of armed violence

### 1.1 The underlying conflict dynamics

Nairobi had already a reputation compared with other capitals in the region of a violent city marked by tension and crime. However, the degree of criminality and the increase in armed violence seemed to move up a gear during the 1990s. That decade created near revolutionary conditions that spawned atomisation and social exclusion in Kenya. Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) imposed by the international financial institutions (IFIs) engendered hikes in food prices, a decline in real wages and redundancies. Reduced public expenditure in education spawned high school dropout rates of 200,000-300,000 a year by 2001, and many of these dropouts made the great trek from the rural into the urban frontier. There they constituted a pool of disaffected youth, open to recruitment by opposition parties and informally organised gangs and larger groups, seeking to take maximum advantage of the associational space that had opened up with the relaxation of laws allowing only a single party and external support to acquire political power. Together, they evolved a culture of political revolt that emerged in the early 1990s.

Instead of spawning good governance, externally imposed political conditionalities laid the foundations for insecurities that would plague the state for more than a decade. Conversely the consequences of economic liberalism were more ambiguous. It was not the nascent private sector that generated insecurity, but rather the regime that had the last word on who accessed expanding opportunities under privatisation (what I describe as SAP sites of accumulation) - this fact enhanced the regime's

power. The regime responded to the situation accordingly, by minimizing the adverse effects of conditionalities, and maximising the favourable ones of liberalisation.

### **Box 1: Life in Mtumba: a Nairobi slum**

The view from a mound of dirt and rubbish on the edge of Mtumba, a Nairobi neighbourhood, is striking. To the South, acacia bushes dot the grass plains of Nairobi National Park as far as the eye can see; to the north lies the dense collection of one-story shacks that constitute Mtumba – 5-6 hectares where roughly 6,000 people crowd into 800 makeshift structures that are cobbled together with mud, wattle, plastic tarps and iron sheets. Priced out of the “formal” real estate market, like 55 percent of Nairobi’s residents, the people of Mtumba have settled in “informal” housing – and this can be both cheered and despaired. Many have fought hard to make it to Nairobi and surmount the daily challenges not only to survive but to improve their community. If government worked properly, it would tap this human potential rather than squander it.

On paper – in local maps and laws – the borders of the National Park’s 11,700 hectares are well defined, helping to protect the rhinos and giraffes that live there. What does not show up on any map is Mtumba. This means that its residents are endangered, receiving no protection from the law, Mtumba’s families have moved twice, landing in their current location in 1992, where they have had their homes completely demolished once and been threatened with eviction several times. “Every day we are waiting for the demolition squad”, says George Ng’ang’a. “We are refugees in our own country”.

Ng’ang’a, like others, came to Mtumba because it offered a respite from rural violence and a closer proximity to jobs. He says his family’s land was taken by the colonial Kenyan government in 1952 to build a golf course. “My father was a businessman”, he says, “so we went to different places, like nomads”. Ng’ang’a continued the itinerant lifestyle, always looking for better opportunities for himself, his wife and their children. “We came to the Nairobi slums, even though I have an education”.

For several years in a row the people of Mtumba have chosen George Ng’ang’a to be the leader of the community’s governing council in informal elections. Residents have elected a committee that has build a school, where four teachers juggle morning and afternoon shifts to teach more than 400 children. On Sundays, community leaders convene committee meetings in the school, Mtumba’s sturdiest structure with a wood frame and corrugated metal walls and roof.

Even with this concerted effort, Mtumba remains ineligible for basic urban services. Residents share three pit latrines and two water taps. “It’s expensive”, says Tom Werunga of the water that private companies truck in and hook up to the taps. “A family needs 100 litres per day for drinking and cleansing.” This costs 25 Kenyan shillings, nearly half the earnings of someone who makes 50-60 shillings per day, as Werunga does. Nairobi’s slum dwellers pay more than residents of wealthy housing estates for water – as a result, they use less than enough to meet health needs. The under-five mortality rate is more than 151 per thousand births in Nairobi slums, far higher than the average for the city as a whole (61 per thousand) and 25 percent more than in rural Kenya (113 per thousand)

*Source: Lawrence Apiyo et al. , (2000) State of the World , Special 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition (The Worldwatch Institute: New York).*

The regime undertook minimum and constricted constitutional amendments. Although allowing multi-partyism and competitive elections in July 1992, it sought to retain control of the new electoral mechanisms when it passed a Bill which compelled prospective winning candidates to the presidency to garner at least 25% of the votes cast in five of the eight electoral provinces in addition to winning the overall popular vote (Katumanga, 1998: 31). At the informal level, it resorted to the appropriation of private violence (violence organized by criminal social formations) and the privatisation of public violence (which sometimes involved privatising security agents before deploying them to serve illegal particularistic interests). The politically instigated ethnic violence that engulfed sections of the state in 1992 in the Rift Valley Province and in 1997 at the Coast should be seen in this perspective. The net effect was not only the narrowing of associational space as a consequence of fear, but also the containment of political groupings and identities opposed to the regime.

What seemed constant was the drift into bad governance characterized by lack of accountability, trust and authority. In 1997 the ruling elite of KANU had retained power with only 40% of the votes cast – as it had in 1992. It did not believe it was accountable to anybody, feeling it could go on manipulating the votes. Instead of enhancing legitimate state penetration into society, an element critical to the evolution of social order, conflict management and resolution, the state was located at the centre of these conflicts. This crisis was exemplified in Nairobi, often caught between an ineffectual City Council and a corrupt and repressive state whose own security agencies were also ineffectual.

## **2.2 The significance of small arms and light weapons**

Weapons began to circulate in Nairobi during the Mau Mau rebellion, the armed resistance that emerged from the nationalist movement, the Kenya African Union (KAU) later KANU, which began to emerge before World War 2. The government of Kenya, whose whites-only representatives then enjoyed a large degree of self-rule, with the support of the colonial government in Whitehall and British forces, declared a state of emergency between 1952-60. The uprising and the brutal repression against it (see Anderson's and Elkins' recent accounts, 2005) was chiefly focused on the Central Province, predominantly inhabited by Kikuyu people, but extended to Nairobi itself. The Kikuyu, then as now, were the largest single element in the ethnic make-up of the city, until large numbers were either sent to detention camps or systematically rusticated. But the city was and remained an organizational and communications hub for the clandestine movement, and was at the center of the web for distributing and making the captured and home-made guns and hand weapons which the rebels used. Both kinds of arms remained a part of life in the city after the Emergency and with the transition to Independence, achieved in 1963 – Nairobi was therefore already a city with a violent feel in the 1960s. Insecurity and high levels of crime continued to be features of the urban environment through the next decades.

Some quantitative shift occurred in 1991-92 when a supply of guns came in to meet a ready market (Weiss, 2004: 6). Arms began to circulate through the region from the war in Uganda in the 1980s and increased with the militarisation of society in Somalia in the 1990s. The channels for this distribution are greased by the links with the Somali population who make up the main element in the population of Kenya's North East Province and their large numbers in Nairobi itself. The suburb of Eastleigh is

regarded as one area where Somalis are congregated, and it is a busy market area where legal and illegal trade coexist and where both rich and poor shop; everything from cut-price fashions and appliances to illegal documents and guns are available.

One 'victimisation survey' (Stavrou, 2002) suggests about 10% of the urban population now possess small arms (while 14% indicated they could get access if required) – they are thus common but not pervasive. However, guns are not the weapon of choice in the many acts of physical attack. The same survey brings out the extent of violent crime – 18% of residents had been victims at least once in the last year – but in only 14% of attacks on men and 8% on women were guns used; physical force or knives were more common. However, these figures relate just to crimes classified as 'physical attacks on the person'. They understate the overall role of arms as a means of enforcement in such acts as car-jackings, road-blocks, 'tithes' on buses, extortion, and in gang fights. Thus 52% of those surveyed said they 'regularly' heard gunshots (more in the inner city than in the informal settlements); and two thirds thought that firearm possession was on the increase.

### **3. The social and cultural context of armed violence**

#### **3.1 The social and geographical context**

Decades after independence, Nairobi remains a differentiated city. Unlike the simple citizen-subject racial dichotomy of the colonial period, in the 1990s the city was spatially divided not only in class terms but around both race and ethnic identities, especially among the urban poor who sometimes seemed to have merely relocated their villages into the city. New entrants from rural areas continued to flood into the city, their numbers augmented by refugees from collapsed states in the region (some estates like Eastleigh and Komarock were literally taken over by Somali, Ethiopian and Rwandese refugees). All sought survival in any way possible, in a city without any pretence to planned amenities and where corruption and outright incompetence abounded. By 2003, new slums such as Soweto, Mukuru kwa Njenga and Maili Kayaba had emerged. Together they housed two thirds of Nairobi's three million population. The working class and lower middle class found themselves in Dandora, Githurai, Zimmerman, Umoja II, Kayole, Mathare North, Ngong' and other neighbourhoods.

City residents responded to poor governance, the lack of services and regime-led predation on public utility spaces in diverse ways. These ranged from exit to more direct forms of engagement. Middle class groups often organized themselves into self-help networks that extracted additional 'taxes' from their members to pay for services such as security, garbage collection, street lights and road repairs which the local government no longer provided. In Karen-Langata, a 'settler' suburb (dominated by affluent whites), residents formed the Karen-Ngata Association in a bid to shield themselves (through legal means) from what they perceived as taxation without services or representation. These differentiated petty bourgeois responses were informed by perceptions of costs and benefits likely to accrue from any action undertaken and their capacity to sustain the said action within the prevailing political context.

The urban lumpen element living in Nairobi's slums opted for limited direct resistance against forced dislocation of their abodes through mass demolitions. Poorly organized, likely to have their lean-to dwelling raised to the ground in the night and generally overwhelmed by the naked violence of the State, their resistance tended to fizzle out as soon as it had begun. Unrestricted state violence led to many deaths as was the case during the Muoroto demolitions of informal settlements near the city centre in the early 1990s. For most slum dwellers, direct resistance was a function of the fact that they had no fall-back position and everything to lose.

In the end, this differentiation of response fragmented oppositional social forces while reinforcing the regime. Resistance failed to evolve into solidarity, greater political participation or effective pressure for good governance. An agenda for far-reaching reforms would have necessitated organizational initiatives led by a radicalized leadership, with an ideology and methods of engagement against the state such as seeking to gain control of the mainstream structures of governance. Instead, there was some limited voice through opposition political parties with their own agendas and interest in accumulation and clientelist politics. Thus economic liberalisation, regime deviance, and an ever-expanding urban population with its contradictory responses of cooption, withdrawal, defiance and resistance, converged in transforming urban engagements and modes of socio-economic reproduction and worked with the regime's logic. The net effect was the decomposition and re-composition of social space. Two cases of engagement of these kinds of social forces are now addressed, both of which involve confrontation with the state, as the ruling elite was forced to liberalise, and did so by prioritising its own short-term survival to the detriment of the state as a viable entity.

### **3.2 Conflict, cooperation and pavement spaces for economic production**

The defiance that characterized the 1990s had the outcome of eroding the probity and capacity of the City Commission to effect its by-laws. Hordes of hawkers took advantage of this to conquer and occupy city alleyways, before subsequently descending on pavements running parallel to main streets such as Tom Mboya and Ronald Ngala Streets and Moi Avenue, in the process constricting movement. By 2002 there were around 10,000 hawkers on the streets of Nairobi. This behaviour set in motion violent modes of production-based contestations. The first contestation pitted licensed (mainly Asian) traders against hawkers. The second pitted the hawkers against the city commissioners seeking to eject them from the city. The third pitted hawkers against regime-friendly beneficiaries of illegal land allocations.

Yet there was also cooperation among these groups, rooted in their mutually reinforcing needs. For instance hawkers who sold second-hand clothes and electronic goods were provisioned by some Asian businessmen and regime-friendly actors engaged in illegal importations of these same goods. Trade in counterfeit goods cost the state around Ksh 40 billion annually in the 1990s (see, "Counterfeits Cost Government Ksh 40b Annually", *The Financial Post*, Issue no. 8, vol 8, 15 Nov. 2004: p1). Women hawking vegetables, on the other hand, paid bribes to city *askaris* (local government police) in exchange for 'permission' to sell their fresh vegetables and fruits to city dwellers heading home from work.

Understanding their voting potential, the President would once in a while seek to intervene on behalf of these petty traders, promising to allocate spaces for them, only to reallocate the same to his political cronies when it suited him. In so doing, he was able to play off one group against another and in the process gain short-term advantage over his opponents. The moment hawkers identified once again with the opposition, the regime would initiate ‘crack-downs’ resulting in violence and loss of property, pushing those with already meagre livelihoods into poverty.

By 2002, hawkers had invaded Harambee Avenue (which houses the seat of Government). They eventually occupied Parliament road, the famous Kenyatta Avenue and Koinange Street. This effectively placed the central business district under their occupation. By the time the Council was retaking its streets in 2003, a new crop of young merchants emerged from among the thousands of unemployed Kenyan college and school leavers. These new entrants rode in on the appeal of cheap South East Asian products and successfully took over hundreds of spaces in the crime-infested central business district abandoned by Asian traders in preference for more secure new and burgeoning shopping malls. The post-KANU administration, which came to power in 2002, has so far failed to create job opportunities for high school or graduate youth, hence they continue to invade the commercial realm, creating precarious petty ‘table shops’. This is a generational phenomenon, cutting across ethnicity.

### **3.3 ‘Militia’ politics and the struggle for residential spaces**

Egged on by the sheer need to survive, thousands of marginalized youths in Nairobi drifted into gangs, militant formations under labels such as Talibans, Baghdad boys, *Jeshi la Mzee*, *Jeshi la Embakasi* and *Mungiki*<sup>1</sup>. These groups could be hired by politicians for around Ksh 250 (US\$4) a time to unleash violence on their opponents. Some provided vigilante security in working class estates. What was notable about the operations of these groups was their mobilisation around ethnic identities within which class difference was obscured. Politicians sought to borrow their violence by playing down their own class interests and instead appealing to common ethnic identities. Such militias operating in Nairobi included *Jeshi la Mzee* (The Elder’s Battalion), who were used to beat up civil society activists such as the Rev. Timothy Njoya, and *Jeshi la Embakasi* (The Embakasi Battalion), an amorphous group that appears in land disputes in Nairobi with the most notable incident being an invasion of the 818-acre piece of land that sits between Umoja II, Kayole and Komarock Estates in Nairobi.

Underlying these formations in some cases are the ownership and habitation of spaces in lower class settlements. For instance, in a settlement like Kibera, with a population of more than 700,000, houses are mainly owned by Nubians and Kikuyu, yet the majority of the tenants are Luo, Luhya and Kamba – reflecting the history and character of different waves of migration into Nairobi from regions unequally developed. Not all neighbourhoods have such clear ethnic distinctions, the extent of mobilisation of ‘ethnicity’ depends on composition of an area, but also on the

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<sup>1</sup> As indicated by the names, these youth find inspiration from certain international actors. In specific terms, these names are ideological indicating admiration for defiance, revolt and the use of any means to wrestle certain contested values from the powerful.

opportunism in a clear strategy to access modes of accumulation (see Section 4 below).

In Kibera, it was not long before conflicts emerged consequent to attempts by the regime to construct a new power base following a national alliance between KANU and the National Democratic Party (NDP). In a local 'Harambee' meeting (aimed at engaging with the public through exhortation and fundraising) held in Kibera on the 31<sup>st</sup> October 2001 and presided over by the then President, Daniel arap Moi, the District Commissioner was instructed to have local rents reduced by 50% (*Daily Nation*, November 1<sup>st</sup> 200), a decision which met stiff resistance from private landlords. The landlords were then set upon by the Talibans - a predominantly Luo militia. Armed with whips, stones, *rungus* (knobkerries) and machetes, the Talibans invaded Kibera (*Daily Nation*, 6<sup>th</sup> March 2002, p2). By the time the violence was contained, perhaps as many as 15 had lost their lives, women had been raped and property destroyed (*The People*, 27<sup>th</sup> November 2001).

Kariobangi (another sprawling informal settlement) was 'ruled' by *Mungiki*, a millenarian group that derived its name from the word *muingi*, meaning masses in Kikuyu. Ideologically it appeals to the marginalised of Kenyan society, even 'the public' at large (see John Githongo, "Why won't the State Clip them Dreadlocks", *East African*, 15 November 2000, and Servant, 2005). *Mungiki* is described in these terms by Nobel Peace Prize laureate, Wangari Maathai:

... the disinherited, the ones who have been refused everything. The schools have rejected them for want of space and they haven't found work. As far as they can see, they're excluded from everything simply for being ethnic Kikuyu (quoted in Servant, 2005).

*Mungiki* advocates a return to cultural values, the right to learn indigenous traditions and opposition to imperialist control of Kenya's economy. Its spread in the 1990s can be attributed to thousands of Kikuyu uprooted from where they had been resettled in the 1960s in parts of the Rift Valley such as Ole Nguruone, Elburgon, Subukia, Laikipia and Nyahururu, following widespread clashes in an area originally dominated by other groups and in colonial times by settler farmers. It began its career in opposition to the regime, and its initial livelihood was in the provision of security in working and lower middle class estates such as Kariobangi North, Kahawa West and Dandora (*Daily Nation*, 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2001).

In the mid 1990s, *Mungiki*'s leaders claimed to have an enrolled membership of between 3.5 million to 4 million people, with branches across the republic. With each member paying Ksh 3 per month, it claimed the capacity to raise as much as Ksh 4.5 million per month (US\$58,000) in subscriptions. In March 2002, *Mungiki* murdered 23 people and injured 31 others in the sprawling slums in Kariobangi North when five hundred of them took revenge on the Taliban for the murder of two of their members.

To the extent that *Mungiki* was perceived to be aligned to the opposition, it was often confronted by state security. But by late 2002, the regime's relation with *Mungiki* was transformed from one of confrontation to overt tolerance of its threats to public order. This change was apparently informed by their decision to back the regime's new presidential candidate, Uhuru Kenyatta. Subsequently they were allowed to take over certain transport routes (a fact that allowed them to raise cash which they used to

pay their adherents), hold public processions and threaten opposition opponents with impunity.

## **4. The political economy of violence**

### **4.1 National politics and corruption**

The linkages between violent criminality stretch from the national level, which provides the context for all the more localised violence. Under this overall system of bandit economics of corruption, those who became agents of the regime were rewarded according to their class status. Large and would-be capitalists with political links were facilitated in entreprenuring bandit companies through which funds were ferreted from the Central Bank. Core to this was the Goldenberg scandal in which more than Ksh 60 billion (US\$769.2 million) was siphoned out of the Central Bank on false pretences. Ksh 4.5 billion (approx. US\$57.7 million) of this cash was used to buy political support for the then ruling party KANU in the forthcoming election in 1992<sup>1</sup>. By 2003, politicians and senior civil servants had set up their own modes of extraction from companies seeking to do business in Kenya. It is alleged that a contract worth Ksh 100 million would cost companies Ksh 7.5 million in bribes. In printing and publishing, companies were forced to part with an average of 11.5% of the total contract sum, in textiles, garments and furniture 8.9%, and in the metal sector 8.8% (Kimuyu, 2004).

In an attempt to detach urban criminalised youth from their 1992 alliances with the opposition, rewards were found, ranging from cash payments to the securing of access to spaces of socio-economic reproduction. Distribution of patronage to new economic 'entrepreneurs' was a tactic promoting the long-term regime consolidation strategy, but in this case the existential 'illegality' of urban lumpen elements, their precarious existence in informal habitations and livelihoods, could be manipulated to motivate them into compliance. If necessary their economic reproduction sites or informal habitations could be destroyed or appropriated for politically compliant individuals who would then be free to dispose of their assets.

Following violent eviction of previous tenants, the new owners would subsequently resell, sometimes to parastatals such as the National Social Security Fund (NSSF) or National Hospital Insurance Fund at a mere song. NSSF is said to have allocated Ksh 30 billion (US\$384.6 million) over five years for acquisition of such plots. Conversely, in a bid to blunt opposition to the regime, allocations of public land were granted to religious organizations, politicians, civil servants and foreign embassies, including the Catholic, Anglican, African Inland Church, East Africa Presbyterian, Seventh Day Adventists, Full Gospel, Pentecostal Independent Church of Africa, Pentecostal Assemblies, Holy Trinity, (see "Churches and MPs named in Land Deals", Daily Nation, 8 October 2004 p1, p 4). Kenya Airports Authority for instance, lost as much as 972.36 hectares of land dished out to private developers who later set up illegal structures on flight paths posing a danger to aviation.<sup>2</sup> The fact that the

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<sup>2</sup> Alotees included Manchester Outfitters Limited, Mechanized Cargo Systems, Kenya Airways, Mumbu Holdings Ltd, Dehasa Investments, NAS Airport Services, Signon Cargo Center, African Airlines, Kejpa Motors, Homegrown Kenya Limited, Skybird Executive Safaris, Pinnacle Development Limited, Oserian Development Co. Ltd, Ramco Investments, Uchumi Supermarkets, Makindu Growers and Packers Ltd, Markfirst Kenya Ltd," See, "How State Firms Lost billions in Bogus Bills", *The Standard*, 12 November 2004, p1.

ruling elite used the State to undertake this process, deciding who stayed or left, enhanced its powers. It became the major source of potential accumulation.

Patronage also saw crafty ‘entrepreneurs’ sell off parastatal land to unsuspecting members of the aspiring middle class in most cases after being allocated the same by the Head of State. One classic example is the allocation of land belonging to the NSSF in Embakasi and along Outering Road (LR21189, 21190 and Block 97 respectively). Instead of paying Ksh 900,000 (its actual value) the buyers paid a mere Ksh 200,000 before subsequently constructing bungalows worth Ksh 3million. NSSF is demanding the actual cost before issuing titles to 300 of such owners. It has threatened them with demolition (*The Standard*, 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2004, p1).

Patronage might also mean access to other sites of accumulation, including drug trafficking, or licences for illegal importation of contraband goods from South East Asia. The diminishing capacity of law and order institutions (see section 4.3, p17) had the effect of spawning other urban forms of predation such as motor vehicle theft and hijackings. The rise in crime is often understood in terms of the ‘deviant sub-culture’ thesis, which attributes poverty and deviance to individual failure, whereas the 1990s deviance in Kenya was state encouraged for politico-economic ends. Some examples of the more localised forms of this corrupt and contested terrain are offered in the next sub-sections.

## 4.2 Transport spaces

Transport spaces stand out as some of the most contested realms in Kenya. Contestations revolve around the *matatus* – cheap private minibuses and cabs competitively plying for business (from the Swahili *tatu* for three reflecting the fare in the early days of three cents). An informal transport system, the *matatu* industry was estimated in 1993 to employ 80,000 people directly countrywide, and an equivalent number indirectly. Its activities were said to earn the economy an estimated Ksh 60 billion, with Ksh 1.9 billion reaped in taxes (Economic Survey, 1993).

Liberalisation of the Kenyan economy in the 1990s animated not only growth in this industry but also struggles for control. Two factors underlay its growth; the relaxation on the import of second hand cars (mainly Urban Nissans and Toyotas) which were immediately converted into *matatus*, and the importation of vehicle chassis which enabled faster assembly of minibuses, christened *manyangas*. The availability of these vehicles expanded sites of accumulation for owners, and jobs as drivers, touts, conductors, or mechanics for thousands of unemployed urban lumpen elements hardened by opposition politics. There were vehicles owners who expected to receive up to Ksh 7,000 a day from the touts who operated their *matatus* in the 1990s. On their part, drivers and touts took home an average of Ksh 1,500 per day (see Ken Opala and Caxton Muene, “The Battle over *Matatu* Control”, *Daily Nation*, 17<sup>th</sup> July 1996). There was also protection money, extorted by poorly remunerated and highly demoralised police officers (some of whom also entered the industry as vehicle owners), from both the owners and the touts lest they were arrested for all sorts of frivolous reasons. The involvement of some police officers as both owners and extortionists seemed to encourage the bandit logic among touts, providing a visa for violence and disregard for the law.

There was cut-throat competition, even wars fought over routes and terminal points among these new petty capitalists. Nairobi alone has a total of 100 *matatu* routes. Cartels emerged to launch a booming business by setting high entry barriers to the routes they controlled. Vehicle owners paid an average of Ksh 20,000-50,000 (depending on potential return) to have their vehicles ply certain routes, as well as an average Ksh 300 per day to various route-manning cartels. They also paid parking fees of Ksh 250 to the city commission. There was Ksh 20 to be paid by the owner every time the vehicle left a given estate with passengers (see Ochieng' Ogodo, "And now welcome into the *Matatu* industry", *East African Standard*, 21<sup>st</sup> February, 2003: p 13).

Enlivening the *matatu* subculture was blaring hip-hop music played with impunity in these vehicles, transforming them into moving discos in total disregard of the tastes of their clients. Clad in baggy trousers and American baseball caps, the khat-chewing *matatu* touts were easily identified by their foul language, disregard for passenger safety and rudeness towards their clients. They would arbitrarily raise the fares or stop the vehicles in the middle of roads in total contempt of traffic rules and regulations.

By the mid-1990s, vigilante groups like *Mungiki* and *Kamjeshi* entered the fray. Given the returns inherent in the *matatu* industry, here were profits which could be converted with ease to finance the tools of violence. The control of *matatu* routes became a battle ground as *Mungiki* and *Kamjeshi* began fighting for physical occupation of the routes and termini: "between July and September 2001 about 15 people were hacked to death consequent to engagements between *Mungiki* and *Kamjeshi* gangs over control of Dandora route" (*Daily Nation*, 20<sup>th</sup> February 2002).

### **Box 2: Violence in transport conflict – by thugs and the state**

On the 6<sup>th</sup> June 2002, before midday, plain-clothes police officers shot and killed four thugs who had commandeered and attempted to rob passengers in a *matatu* plying route no. 16. The thugs who had boarded the vehicle around about high-rise estate had attempted to divert the city-bound *matatu* to Ngong' when they were shot by the police near the Mbagathi way mosque. Demonstrations held by *matatu* drivers and conductors in May 2002 points to the concerns of the transport industry over this issue. Touts interviewed on a local TV station, observed that all *matatu* routes in Nairobi suffers an average of at least three car-jackings every three nights

By November 2001, *Mungiki* had taken over the Kayole, Babadogo and Kikuyu routes while the Transport Licensing Board sat on the fence and failed to support the *Matatu* Welfare Association's (MWA) demand that they keep out. The Government in most cases remained a bystander as these pro-opposition groups fought for supremacy, the police seemingly unable to contain their activities ("The *Matatu* Industry: The Big Issue", *East Africa Standard*, 5 November 2001: p 3). The logic that underlay violence in the industry was that the regime was exercising options by deciding whom to please or displease. To the extent that the violence involved opposition-linked groups, it was disinclined to intercede. Yet it would selectively rush to intervene when the conflict threatened the interests of regime-friendly interests.

Later the inability of the Government to demonstrate its monopoly over violence for the common good saw *Mungiki* take over the lucrative route 32 serving the sprawling Dandora and Mathare North slums, as well as the Komarock and Umoja routes (*East African Standard*, November 2001). In total, they successfully took over 15 out of 100 routes in Nairobi. This coincided with their new modes of collaboration with the regime in late 2002. It was not until 2004 that a serious attempt was made by the new NARC government (which came to power at the 2002 election) to bring order in the transport sector. This entailed the imposition of new rules that limited the numbers of passengers that could be ferried by vehicles and the compulsory fitting of seat belts. They also attempted to remove the self-imposed stage managers. After a brief resistance by various gangs, the rules were operationalized. (*Mungiki* went underground, only to re-emerge in January and February of 2003 with the killing of several people in Nakuru and security officers in Nairobi's Dandora area).

### **4.3 'Lumpen' banditry**

The 1990s saw increased forms of banditry with roots among urban lumpen elements, and with transport as their main realm of predation. Their audacious behaviour was shadowed by the diminishing institutional capacity of the police force. Constraints on government recurrent expenditure imposed by the IMF and the World Bank had the net effect of freezing not only salaries of security forces but also their complements. By 1996, there were 30,000 police officers compared to a population of about 30 million, translating into a 1:1,000 ratio or one police office for every 1,000 Kenyans. By 2002 it had grown to 1:1400. Worse still, the security forces suffered from lack of infrastructure and institutional capacity, poor leadership and corruption in recruitment, promotion and operational matters. Poor pay combined with favouritism to engender demoralisation and lethargy in the force. This was reflected in the absence of adequate supervision with respect to gun handling, to the extent that some began hiring out their guns to others for robbery and other criminal activities.

In the late 1990s the state created the National Intelligence Service. The core of this service was recruited from the best cells of the police force. Little effort was made to retrain and improve the welfare of those who remained. Young graduate recruits to the police force ended up frustrated due to poor pay and lack of promotion opportunities. As the frontiers for primitive accumulation increased, the security forces jumped on the bandwagon. Many doubled up in extorting bribes and collaborating with bandits. Special units created to combat crime became a source of the same. Some police officers went to the extent of leaking operational plans (see the latest case in Hudson Gumbihi, "Officer under probe for 'assisting' thugs", *The People Daily*, 13 October 2004: p18). Before long, security frameworks become fragile, lacking effectiveness and legitimacy. It was as if state institutions were engaged in what Crawford Young calls 'self-cannibalization'. Citizens experienced state rule as simple predation instead of protection.

## **5. The impact on poverty**

### **5.1 Loss of assets**

The UN-Habitat/Intermediate Technology Group East Africa survey (ITDG, 2001) carried out in March-June 2001 indicated that 40% of Nairobians had been victims of

robberies, and 22% had been victims of theft at least once in 2000. 18% claimed to have been physically assaulted. Most respondents intimated that they had been victims in broad daylight.

Overall, increases in these and other crimes have the net effect of creating a siege mentality that has seen Kenyans leave their places of work very early, in the process generating heavy traffic jams which in turn engender the loss of productive time. Most are afraid of accessing money dispensing machines for fear of being attacked

By 2004, the very survival of urban economic activities had come under serious threat from lumpen banditry, exacerbated by the collapsing formal economy and the influx of small arms. The direct cost of this bandit economy can be indicated by estimating the loss of assets. For instance, one of the more recent developments has been the hijacking of public vehicles and robbery of their passengers, including *matatus*. Drivers have been shot, conductors and passengers robbed of their money, cell phones and other personal effects. In some extreme cases passengers and drivers have been robbed, assaulted and stripped naked. Women have also been subjected to rape ordeals (according to interviews with Senior Security and Administrative Officers engaged in urban anti-bandit operations).

In a survey of incidents of matatu highway thefts carried out in Nairobi and its suburbs between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> June 2004 for this study<sup>3</sup>, it was found that out of 181 respondents on nine out of 24 major routes surveyed, 46 people or 25.5% confirmed having experienced hold-ups of the vehicles on which they were travelling at least once during the year. Route 30 (Kinoo, Westlands, Uthiru) registered the highest proportion of hijacking incidents. A few had experienced the hijacking and driving off of the *matatu*. Routes with high rates of hold-up tend to have certain characteristics. These include high density of population and the availability of accessible escape routes for thugs. These routes are also characterised by poorly lit picking-up points from which thugs can access the vehicles.

A total of Ksh 576,350 (US\$7,389) in cash and 398 mobile phones valued at Ksh 1,173,000 (US\$15,038) were reported as expropriated at gunpoint in these hold-ups. The total value of personal assets stolen in the course of the 46 reported incidents of carjacking thus amounted to Ksh 2,168,350 (US\$27,799.4). The average value of stolen assets per incident of hijacking translates to roughly Ksh 47,000. If it is estimated that the number of *matatu* vehicles in Nairobi is of the order of 10,000, extrapolation suggests that the number of hijacked vehicles at 25.5% would be about 2,500 *matatus* annually. The immediate loss to passengers from this one kind of violent activity (losses would be much greater if hold-ups of private vehicles were included), thus translates to the equivalent to US\$6million per year predominantly from Kenyans of lesser means who rely on public transport. The money is equivalent to the total school tuition fees of an average 750 secondary school students attending for one year. Those operating in this highway robbery, basically young unemployed,

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<sup>3</sup> The data in this section is extracted from findings of a survey undertaken on a cross-section of routes in Nairobi.. Specifically for the AVPI Study. The routes surveyed included Numbers 9/6 (Eastleigh, Pangani, Ngara),32/42 (Dandora), 33/34 (Embakasi, Tena, Donholm, Pipeline), 30 (Westlands, Kangemi, Kinoo), 19/61 (Komarock, Kayole),125/126 (Ongata Rongai, Kiserian), 46/56(Kawangware), 105/115 (Kikuyu, Limuru), 111 (Ngong, Karen) points to the intensity and nature of this mode of banditism. Only 15% or a total of 817 vehicles mainly Toyotas/Nissans and Mini-Buses were sampled

of course reap the returns, which are far greater than what they would get if lucky enough to be in employment.

On average, poor Kenyans live on less than a dollar per day. These poor also end up paying more for goods and services due to the increased costs of living engendered by thuggery. Again evidence from the *matatu* traffic is illustrative of the premiums they pay. For instance, on Routes 32/42 (Dandora), and 19/61 (Kayole, Komarock) *matatus* tend to hike their fares by 25% from 8.00pm at night as a premium for the risk to owners and franchisees of *matatus*. In a bid to respond to highway banditry, *matatu* proprietors have had to purchase security screening gadgets. Those without them often drive their vehicles to police stations for body searches. Most *matatus* now avoid picking up passengers en route at night. The net effect of all this is loss in earnings, anxiety and panicky exits from Nairobi that continue to impact negatively on the formal economy. The effects of highway robbery continue to marginalise the already disadvantaged poor. Given this state of affairs, and the dangers of *matatu* transport, many are forced to trek long distances on foot to work. Many others just give up on seeking work in parts of the city too far to walk and too dangerous or expensive to reach by *matatu*.

In a bid to combat this mode of banditry, the new police commissioner, General Hussein Ali, has set up new police units such as *Spiders* who operate from Police *matatus* (which are also expected to deal with rapists) and diplomatic corps whose detail is the protection of diplomats. There has also been an increase in the number of road-blocks and motor vehicle inspections aimed at flushing out gun-carrying bandits.

In addition, Nairobi has been experiencing high levels of predation on personal vehicles. Here, of course, it is the better-off who are being targeted. While urban lumpen youth are again at the core of this type of urban banditry, they are here basically puppets of organized syndicates that make the one-man 'jobs' of the 1980s pale into insignificance. While the latter were basically focused on the city centre, the current predatory activities are well organised to serve regional bandit markets. The godfathers seem to be individuals involved in 'respectable' businesses that act as fronts to camouflage their real activities. Those involved are alleged to include renowned industrialists and businessmen (according to interviews with senior security and administrative officers involved in urban anti-bandit operations).

In the early 1980s it was only parked vehicles that were stolen; now this has extended to those being driven. Like the *matatu* banditry this mode is also characterized by high levels of impunity that have seen motorists killed who even slightly hesitate to hand over their vehicles. During the four year period from 2000 to 2004 the scale and value of this trade have increased dramatically. In 2000, an estimated 528 cars were stolen; in addition 1,775 cars were robbed (i.e. car-jacked). In total there were 2,300 stolen or robbed in the year 2000 - 6.4 cars per day. Of the total of 2,300 vehicles stolen/robbed, only 693 cars were recovered; representing an average recovery rate of 30%. In 2001, a total of 2,375 cars were stolen/robbed. Of these, 1,025 were recovered representing a recovery rate of 43.2%. In the year 2002, 942 cars were stolen, another 2,196 were carjacked, making a total of 3,138; 1,633 cars were recovered. The recovery rate for the same period was 52%. In 2003 a total of 759 and 2196 cars were stolen and carjacked respectively. These added up to 2955. 51% (1534) were recovered.

It is estimated that about 50% of these stolen vehicles found their way through a well coordinated syndicate into neighbouring States - Uganda, Tanzania, DRC and to a lesser extent Rwanda, Burundi, Zambia and Malawi. Perhaps another 40% of the cars were cannibalised for second hand spare parts. The remaining 10% of the cars had their colour, number plates, chassis number altered and were then resold in the local black market.

In the first five months of 2004, 270 vehicles had been recorded stolen, another 857 cars jacked/robbed - a total of 1127, which proportionately would suggest projections of 2705 for the whole year. The law enforcement agencies had a recovery rate of 45.5%. The total for the five-year period 2000-2004 figures would thus be of the order of 12,000 vehicles stolen/robbed. The total value would be of the order of \$60,000 – although not all of this would be a net loss to the economy, or government revenues.

According to press reports, 90% of the vehicles recovered in 2004 had been used by criminals as get-away cars. Musa Yego of the special Crimes Prevention Unit noted that 70% of incidents occurred in upper class ‘low-density’ estates in Nairobi. The level of sophistication of the process is discernible by the tactics deployed. Reconnaissance is undertaken on the victims and ambush spots. The most popular points are black spots: busy roundabouts, T-junctions, pothole points, feeder roads and gates. All carjacking incidents occur with the use of guns. Each gang of carjackers steals an average of one car each day. According to the same police reports about 75% of vehicles stolen or robbed were taken at gun point, i.e. about 8,000 of the vehicles taken in the last five years. To sustain the rate of car-jackings there would have to be between 50 to 100 armed gangs, bearing in mind that it takes one day to plan and steal a vehicle, another day to either dismantle it prior to selling the spare parts or arranging to have new but fake papers, new number plates and the change of colour needed to drive the car across the border. Reports from victims suggest that there are typically three or more guns in each gang.

## **5.2 Impact on the macro-economy**

Nairobi remains a city under constant decomposition and recomposition, characterized by vicious struggles over living spaces. The exclusivist logic of the formal political economy ensures that thousands in the slums (especially hawkers and self-employed artisans, unemployed youth and women) remain marginalised. The informal economy, including the urban banditry, may explain the survival of Kenya despite aid embargoes from IFIs and the massive disinvestment manifested in poor physical and communication infrastructure and diminished institutional capacity to guarantee law and order – although violent crime is one explanation of the disinvestments.

Thus, one measure of the macro-economic impact of this climate of marginality and insecurity is capital flight. Between 1999 and 2002, a total of 140 foreign investors pulled out, citing corruption, poor infrastructure, bureaucratic bottlenecks and increased crime rate. Direct foreign investment dropped from Ksh 26 billion to Ksh 22 billion between 1996 and 1998. It has been estimated (Ngunyi, 1999) that the bandit economy averaged Ksh 1.5 billion (US\$19.2 million) and Ksh 6.2 billion (US\$ 79.5 million) annually for vehicle theft and hijacking and predation on forests

respectively between 1990 and 1998, whilst government corruption averaged Ksh 127.4 billion between 1990 and 1999 (see Ngunyi, 1999: p21).

The Kenyan regime literally sustained a bandit economy that ran parallel to the weak formal economy. Conversely there are some key beneficiaries of the crime rates such as the owners of security firms. The top 20 security companies earned Ksh 20 billion (US\$250m) in 1999. A conservative estimate of a 10% increase would put their earnings at Ksh 32 billion (US\$400m today). More of these firms continue to mushroom, whilst security guards are among the most poorly paid and hardly earn enough to send their children to school.

Coupled with an increasing sense of insecurity at the personal level, Kenya's economic recovery and by inference people's standards of living will continue to be undermined. Local industrialists and multinational corporations represented in the Eastern African Association (with 140 member companies, *East African* 10-16 Oct., 2002) point to crime as their second main concern after poor telecommunication infrastructure. Of the 100 companies sampled in the EAA's own survey, insecurity scored 87.8% compared to communication at 90%.

The widespread perception of insecurity as a result of the violent organised crime in Nairobi also affects the macro-economy in two other dimensions. Tourism, Kenya's largest foreign exchange earner, is always very sensitive to fears of violence. After some decline in the early 1990s, in 1997 in the wake of major clashes in and around Mombasa, centre of the coastal tourist industry, this event led to a further measurable reduction in the number of foreign tourists. There was also a less clear-cut and more gradual loss due to Kenya's and especially Nairobi's image as an unsafe place. The US Government issued an official 'advisory', warning travellers not to visit Kenya, and British Airways stopped flights. By the late 1990s tourist numbers (in 2000 it had fallen to half of the 900,000 recorded in the late 1980s) and revenues had fallen and the tourist industry faced crisis. Since then there has been a partial recovery and tourist numbers finally began to rise again from 2003 after the election of the new government, and the US downgraded its advisory merely to warning travellers to be careful when visiting Kenya.

The same threatening image seemed likely to affect one other aspect of Nairobi's economy, when the UN system mooted a downgrading of Nairobi's security rating in 2001. The city is host to by far the largest UN complex in Africa, even of the international headquarters of bodies such as the UN Environment Programme and UN Habitat. Associated with the UN facilities, a large number of diplomatic and development aid agencies, and of NGOs, some concerned with the many neighbouring conflict countries, are represented and have larger than average personnel there. One 2002 estimate suggested that there were 20,000 expatriates in the city (quoted in Servant, 2005), most of them earning and (at least in part) spending high salaries. If such a down-grading were to happen there would be a dramatic impact on this presence that would have a major multiplier effect on the Kenya economy.

The climate of insecurity also imposes extra costs on a range of business activities. People's fears about accessing cash machines has led to plans by the Kenya Bankers' Association to install closed circuit surveillance cameras along Nairobi's main streets.

Shopping complexes in Nairobi such as the Village Market and Sarit Centre have also invested heavily in security. Village Market spends an average of Ksh 500,000 (US\$6,250) per month on 24-hour patrols and security gadgets. Alongside this are insurance premiums which have also increased by between 5 to 10% annually. Sarit Centre incurs a security bill of Ksh 800,000 (US\$10,000) per month. The cost of hiring regular police patrols have also gone up from Ksh 200 (US\$2.5) to Ksh 1,000 (US\$12.5) per day. More critical is the increasing despondency amongst business elements that the state cannot guarantee their rights to property, a factor that constrains commitment to hard work and encourages the drift towards informal economies as the cheap way out of an increasingly marginalised formal economy. Informalisation is boosted every time customers purchase cheap goods which are probably stolen. Conversely the criminals operate with an increasing sense of impunity.

## 6. Recommendations

To extricate the city from the morass in which it finds itself, there are two fundamental requirements:

- To re-establish an effective **governance** realm within the country as a whole and in Nairobi in particular.
- To promote a **poverty-reducing development** path that will, in particular provide gainful livelihoods for young people.

Promotion of these basic goals will be a challenging task, demanding the reversal of policies and patterns of the last decades, among a broad range of initiatives specific priorities should include:

### 6.1 On governance

- **Corruption** is perceived as a major root cause of violence – a massive 96% of the ITDG Survey (Stavrou, 2002: 40) claimed that corruption was endemic in Kenyan society. And, in the same survey, the suggested government action to make Nairobi a safer place that was cited most frequently was tackling corruption. Unfortunately, after promising initial signs, the new government has not made major in-roads into the problem since 2002. The commissioner appointed to spearhead anti-corruption resigned from government in 2005, and the UK High Commissioner made sharp public criticisms of performance during 2004.
- **A Constitutional Review** is a task crucial to a range of specific reforms in procedures and capacities, including the possibility of redefining local government and its responsibilities and relations with central government – badly needed to deal with the ineffectiveness of governance and the provision of security in Nairobi. However, this process, which began under the old regime is still stalled in Kenya.
- **Land reform** is another essential item on Kenya's agenda of reform, which is the subject of a process just beginning which would allow some participation. Tackling the issue nationally can contribute to poverty reduction, especially to the landlessness that drives young people to town, but there are also issues surrounding land rights in the city. Granting secure title to slum dwellers in the areas they currently occupy will give them security of tenure and enable them to

access credit in banks and to transform their existing dead capital into productive capital total integrated in the formal economy.

## **6.2 On poverty-reducing development**

- With an estimated Ksh 300 billion (US\$3.75 billion) stashed outside the state by former power wielders<sup>4</sup>, Kenya needs to appeal to her development partners to help her recover the same which would make possible a range of measures, and the operationalisation of a development state.
- An adequate strategy is seen as requiring more than just increased capacity – there are calls for a developmental state to grapple with questions of access to means of production and enhanced state penetration in the society.
- The increasing rate of crime will not be contained without a concerted attempt to resolve the crisis of more than four million young Kenyans ejected out of the formal system by the IMF-World Bank driven logic of a minimalist state. A specific measure would be for a national youth service under the military which can help build infrastructure, housing units and schools, and in the process enhance skills; or some other form of public works provision to absorb them is needed. Alternatively, opportunities to return to school would be another solution.

## **6.3 On gun crime**

- Other concrete measures could include those to reduce the small arms in circulation and also to promote an alternative to the gun culture that attracts young men. Further support should be given to a number of initiatives at local level such as the Kasarani Starehe Youth (KASTA), which began to broker a peace between youth in the two neighbourhoods in the title of their organisation, and the Nairobi Youth Network for Peace (NYNP) which is an umbrella body to which KASTA and other groups belong.

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<sup>4</sup> See, for instance, “Found: Sh. 75 billion Stashed Abroad by KANU Looters”, *Daily Nation*, 17 December, 2003: p1.

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