

Note for Discussion: Kenya, Horizontal Inequalities and the Political Disturbances of 2008

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NOTE FOR DISCUSSION

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By Frances Stewart¹

Sharp political and socioeconomic horizontal inequalities (HIs) are critical factors behind the disturbances in Kenya.

Kenya has long had significant socioeconomic HIs, of colonial and geographic origin, which have continued over the 45 years since independence (see e.g. Klugman et al., 1999). Indeed, a major question throughout this time is why these did *not* lead to conflict, as similar inequalities have in other countries, including neighbouring Uganda. One explanation is that, despite some changes in balance, the political system was for the most part basically inclusive from an ethnic perspective. But this changed during the last few years of Mwai Kibaki's presidency, and the 'rigged' elections of December 2007 meant that the political HIs would not be corrected by the ballot.

Population distribution

Table 1: Composition of the Kenyan Population

Ethnic group	1969	1989	1999	2003(DHS)
Kikuyu	20.1	20.8	18.5	24.2
Luhya	13.3	14.4	14.2	15.0
Luo	13.9	12.4	10.8	10.4
Kalenjin	10.9	11.5	12.1	7.9
Others	41.8	41.0	44.4	42.5

Source: Kanyinga (2007) from census; DHS (2003).

The colonial regime hardened divisions by giving reserved territories to particular ethnic groups. The Kikuyu are the largest group, but account for less than a quarter of the population (Table 1). As can be seen from Table 2, each group dominates in one region: the Kikuyu are predominately in Central Province, Luhya in Western Province, Luo in Nyanza, and Kalenjin in the Rift Valley. The Rift Valley (the location of the worst of the violence in 2008), contains sizeable numbers of Kikuyu and of Luhya. Comparing 1969 and 2003, every region has become more mixed ethnically: the share of the Kalenjin in the Rift Valley population dropped from just over a half to around 40%, while the share of the Kikuyu in that province rose from 15% to 21%. The mixed ethnicity in the Rift Valley, and the change over time, largely reflects land policies and purchases. These have colonial origins, when large portions of land in the fertile Rift Valley were taken from the local people (mainly Kalenjins) by the British. But the early independence resettlement schemes did not give the land back to the original owners, but disproportionately to Kikuyu. Subsequently the situation was worsened both through political acquisitions and purchases to the disadvantage of the local Maasai and Kalenjin (Oyugi 2000).²

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² 'Using the economic and political leverage available to them during the Kenyatta regime, the Kikuyu, Meru and Embu groups, but especially the Kikuyu, took advantage of the situation and formed many land-buying companies. These companies would, throughout the 1960s and 70s, facilitate the settlement of hundreds of thousands of Kikuyu in the Rift Valley, especially in the districts with arable land – notably Nakuru, Uasin Gishu, Nandi, Trans Nzoia and Narok. The land in the said districts historically belonged to the Kalenjin, Maasai and kindred groups such as the Samburu.' (Oyugi 2000: 7).

Table 2: Regional location of different groups

Group	% of total population		Major location	% of 'own' regional population		% of Nairobi population	% of Rift Valley population	
	1969 (census)	2003 (DHS)		1969	2003	2003	1969	2003
Kikuyu	20.1	24.2	Central	96	91.8	34.2	15	21.2
Luhya	13.3	15.0	Western	88	83.8	1.3	7	11.2
Luo	13.9	10.4	Nyanza	63	53.4	2.5	Na	2.3
Kalenjin	10.9	7.9	Rift Valley	51	41.4	2.5	51	41.4

Source: Kanyinga (2007), taken from Nellis (1974); DHS (2003).

Political background

There have been three presidents:

1. Jomo Kenyatta: 1963-1978 (a Kikuyu), with vice-president Daniel Arap Moi (Kalenjin). Although the regime started as inclusive, Oginga Odinga, the first vice-president (a Luo) was soon expelled from the cabinet and subsequently imprisoned.
2. Moi: 1978-2002, whose regime ended when what had become his agreed term came to an end. In the elections of end-2002, his preferred candidate, Uhuru Kenyatta, was defeated by a rainbow coalition with support from all groups, headed by Mwai Kibaki (Kikuyu).
3. Kibaki: 2003 -2008.

Political HIs

According to Kanyinga 'Although there are pressures to ensure equitable or even equal representation of groups in the Cabinet, the tendency has been for presidents to first reward ethnic elite from their home areas'. (Kanyinga 2007: 373). Nonetheless, we see fairly inclusive cabinets for most of the post-independence period. This is illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3: Group representation in cabinet

% in cabinet	Kenyatta (Kikuyu)		Moi (Kalenjin)		Kibaki (Kikuyu)	
	1966	1978	1979	2001	2003-4	Nov. 2005
Kikuyu	28.6	28.6	30	4.0	16.0	18.1
Luhya	9.5	4.8	11	14	16.0	21.2
Luo	14.3	14.3	11	7	16.0	3.1
Kalenjin	4.8	4.8	11	17	7.0	6.1
Total nos in cabinet	21	21	26	28	25	33
Relative representation (% in cabinet, in relation to share of population)	Kenyatta		Moi		Kibaki	
	1966	1978	1979	2001	2003-4 ^a	Nov. 2005 ^a
Kikuyu	1.42	1.37	1.44	0.22	0.86	0.98
Luhya	0.71	0.35	0.8	0.99	1.13	1.49
Luo	1.01	1.04	0.97	0.65	1.48	0.30
Kalenjin	0.46	0.44	1.02	1.40	0.56	0.50

Source: calculated from Kanyinga (2007)

a: using population shares from 1999 census.

- During Kenyatta's regime, the Kikuyu consistently had 28.6% or more of cabinet positions, considerably above their share of the population and the Luhya and the Kalenjin were notably underrepresented. However, this was, to some extent, compensated for by the distribution of assistant ministers, while Luo representation was in line with their population share and minorities were well represented.
- Under Moi, Kalenjin representation in the cabinet rose from 11% in 1979 to 17% in 2001, well above their share of the population, while the Kikuyu share fell sharply from 30% in 1979 to 20% in 1985, and just 4% in 1998 and 2001. Luo representation at first rose, but fell sharply after 1987 and there were no Luos in the 1998 cabinet and just 2 in 2001. The Luhya representation increased to 14%, in line with their share of population. Other groups were again reasonably represented.
- Under Kibaki, initially (2003-4) the National Rainbow Coalition was maintained, with equitable representation; only the Kalenjin were clearly underrepresented, and this only lasted for one and a half years. Over this period, Kibaki appointed ministers from opposition parties, so that the Luo and Luhya were well represented in the cabinet, although their representation in assistant minister positions worsened. But after a referendum rejected Kibaki's proposed new constitution, the cabinet composition shifted in favour of the Kikuyu and Luhya, with a severe loss for the Luo – who historically have often been in opposition to the Kikuyu (Elischer 2008). Their share of cabinet positions fell to just 3% and they had no assistant ministers. Kibaki also replaced some top military officers with Kikuyus, but most soldiers came from poorer groups (*Financial Times* 22/02/08)

The ethnic make-up of senior civil servant (permanent secretaries) positions also reflects the political weight of particular groups in government, especially in the Moi and Kibaki regimes. Under Moi, the proportion of Kikuyu permanent secretaries dropped sharply (from 30% to 9%) and the Kalenjin proportion rose from 11% to 35%. Kibaki restored the position of the Kikuyu in line with their population share, the major losers being the Kalenjin (Table 4).

Table 4: Distribution of permanent secretaries by group

Regime/date	% of permanent secretaries			
	Kikuyu	Luhya	Luo	Kalenjin
Kenyatta 1970	37.5	8.0	12.5	8.3
Kenyatta 1978	23.8	4.8	9.5	4.8
Moi 1979	29.6	11.1	3.7	11.1
Moi 2001	8.7	13.0	8.7	34.8
Kibaki 2003-4	22	7	15	15
Kibaki Nov. 2005	18.7	9.3	9.3	6.2
	Relative representation			
	Kikuyu	Luhya	Luo	Kalenjin
Kenyatta 1970	1.87	0.60	0.90	0.76
Kenyatta 1978	1.14	0.35	0.74	0.44
Moi 1979	1.42	0.80	0.29	1.03
Moi 2001	0.42	0.92	0.81	2.88
Kibaki 2003-4	1.19 ^a	0.49 ^a	1.39 ^a	1.24 ^a
Kibaki Nov. 2005	1.01 ^a	0.65 ^a	0.86 ^a	0.51 ^a

Source: Kanyinga 2007.

a) using census data for population share for 1999.

Looking at this data we can identify three 'danger' points, where some groups' representation is particularly low: first, Luhya representation at the end of the Kenyatta regime, when relative representation in cabinet fell to 0.35 and representation among permanent secretaries to 5%, but this was rapidly corrected by

Moi; secondly, the sharp loss of representation of Kikuyus under Moi from 1994 – by 2001 relative representation in the cabinet was just 0.22 and representation among permanent secretaries was 9%. However, as a group the Kikuyu were much richer than the others (see below) and this may have reduced the political danger from this underrepresentation. In any case, it was reversed by Kibaki. The third danger point was at the end of the Kibaki regime, when Luo relative representation was just 0.3 (and Kalenjin 0.5) and representation among permanent secretaries by both groups also fell. In principle, this would have been reversed by electoral victory – hence the importance of the elections.

These political inequalities are important in themselves, as where there are sharp discrepancies in position vis-à-vis share of population, and especially where there are sharp changes, this can lead to resentment among political leaders. Moreover, the each group's share of senior positions in government and the civil service is also important as these help determine the group distribution of government expenditure.

Socioeconomic HIs

Political HIs particularly motivate leaders, and where they are sharp, provide an incentive for group mobilisation. However, socioeconomic HIs are those that people confront on a daily basis, and where these are large, may make people more likely to respond to mobilisation efforts. The regional concentration of different population groups in Kenya makes it possible to use regional data to illuminate socioeconomic HIs there.

Figure 1 shows the evolution of coverage of four major categories of service by region for the period 1993-2003. The first thing to note is that, despite some improvement over the years, the total coverage is very low. For example, access to safe water is just over 40% for the country as a whole, improved sanitation is below 20%, access to electricity and net secondary enrolment rates are just over 10%. Socioeconomic HIs are also apparent: the capital city, Nairobi, as in most countries, outperforms all other regions. Apart from the Central province (where the Kikuyu are concentrated) Coast (small coastal communities) tends to do best and Nyanza (mainly Luo), Western (mainly Luhya), Eastern (Kamba and Meru) and Rift Valley (Kalenjin, Kikuyu and Masai) do less well. The relative disadvantages of the regions most associated with the violent opposition – Nyanza, Rift Valley and Western provinces are shown in Figure 2 and Table 5. We use the ratio of performance of each region to that of Central, to indicate the performance of the various groups vis-à-vis Kikuyu.

Table 5. HIs in some socioeconomic categories, various dates

Ratio to central province	Under 5 mortality	Provincial health facilities	Secondary net enrolment rates		Spending on major roads, per person 1990-2000	Asset ownership, 2003 ^a
			Boys	Girls		
Nyanza	3.81	0.74	0.96	0.63	0.4	0.54
Rift Valley	1.43	1.11	0.66	0.49	0.73	0.60
Western	2.67	0.44	0.75	0.63	0.33	0.52

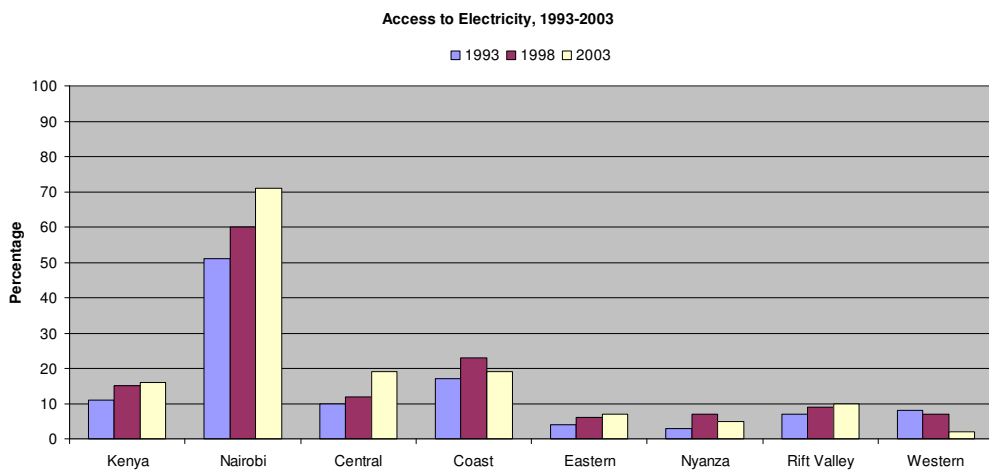
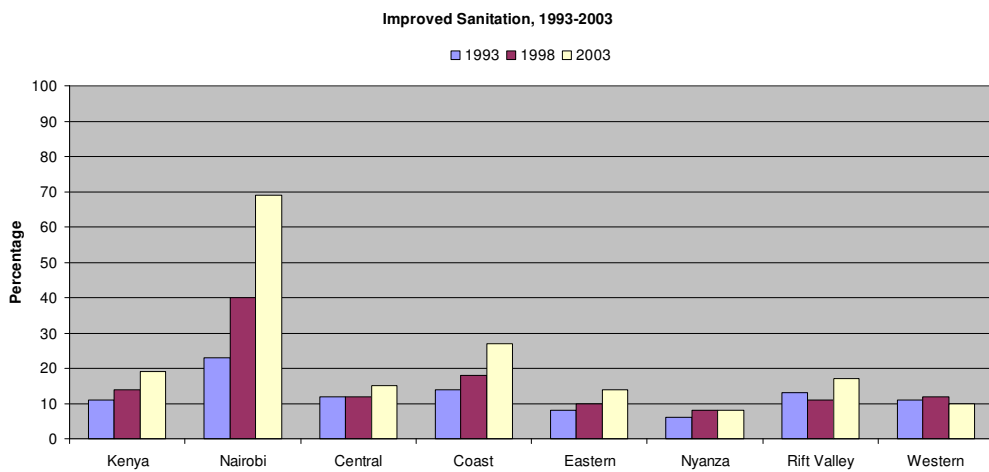
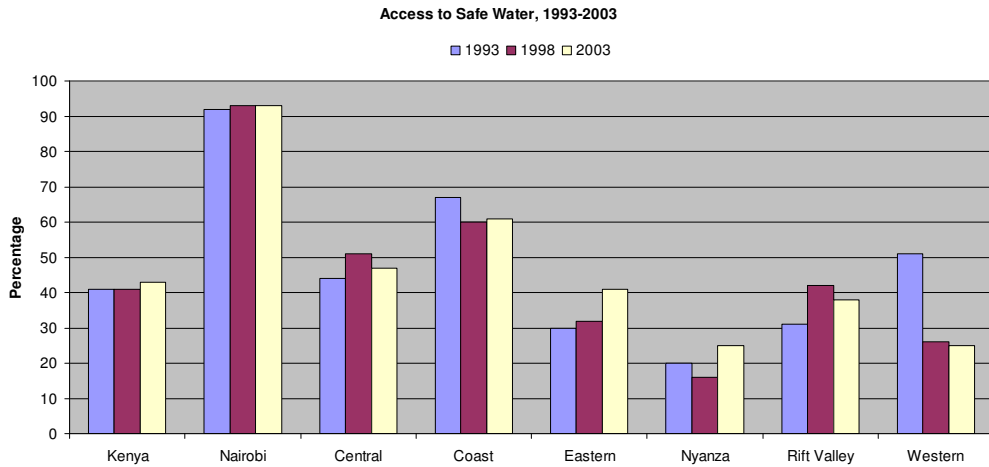
Source: drawn from ((SID 2007)); DHS (2003).

a: asset index is constructed as the sum of household ownership of five assets (television, car, motorbike, radio, refrigerator), with each asset weighted according to the proportion of the sample who do not own it.

It is noteworthy that each of the regions performs worse than Central on most indicators, though the Rift Valley does better on sanitation and health facilities, which

partly reflects the priorities of Moi, whose home region is the Rift Valley. According to Kiringai 'Moi's redistribution policy was more of an ethnic redistribution, switching

Figure 1: Service coverage by region in Kenya, 1993-2000



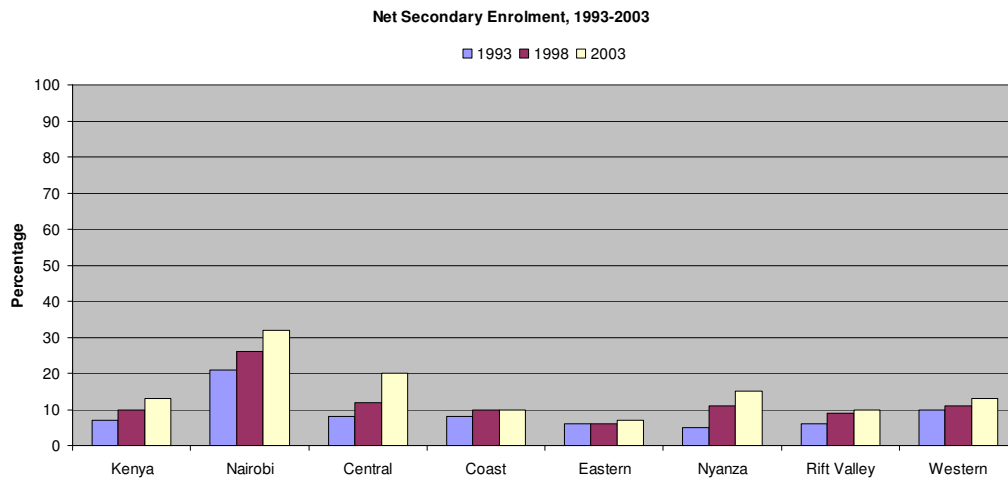
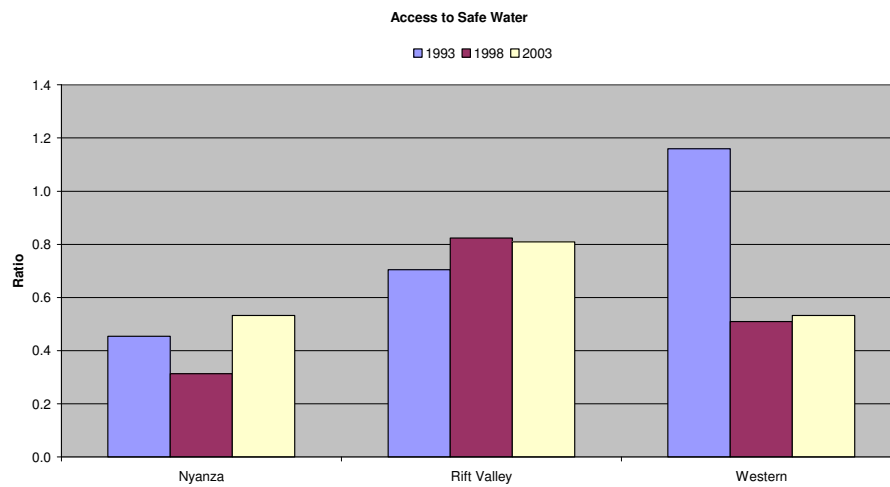
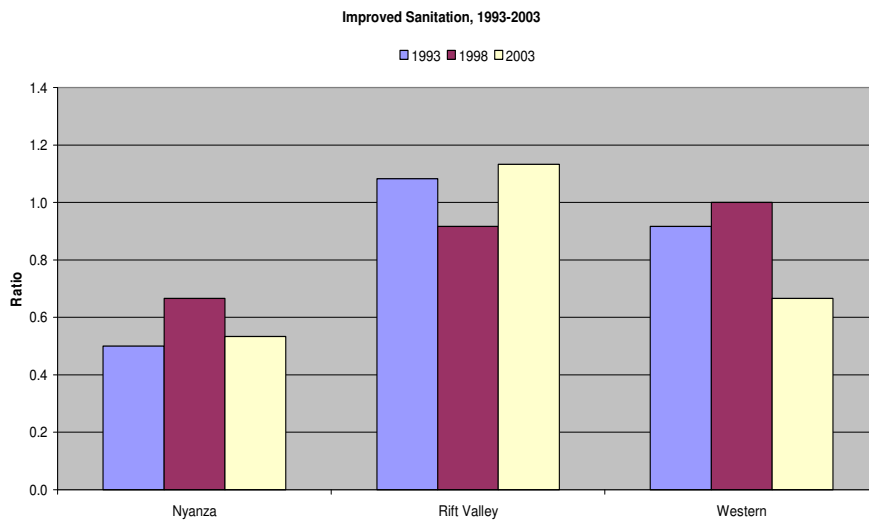
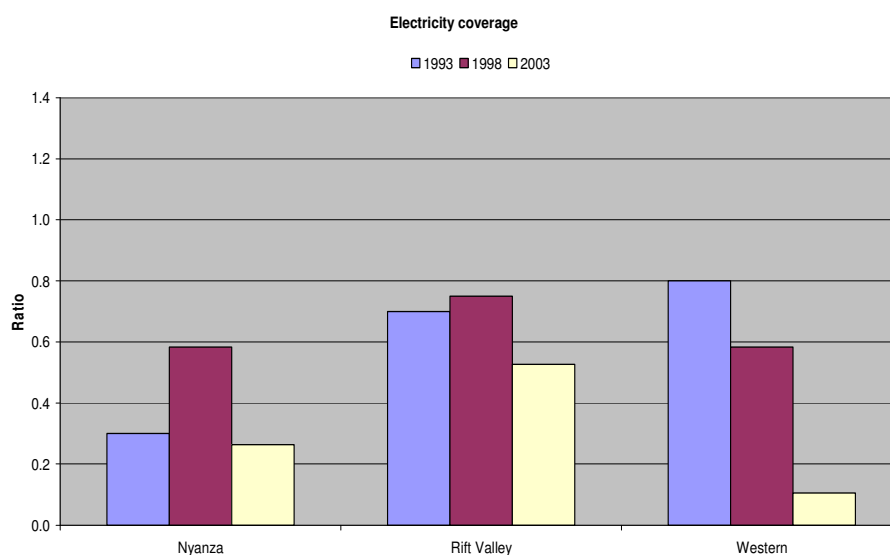
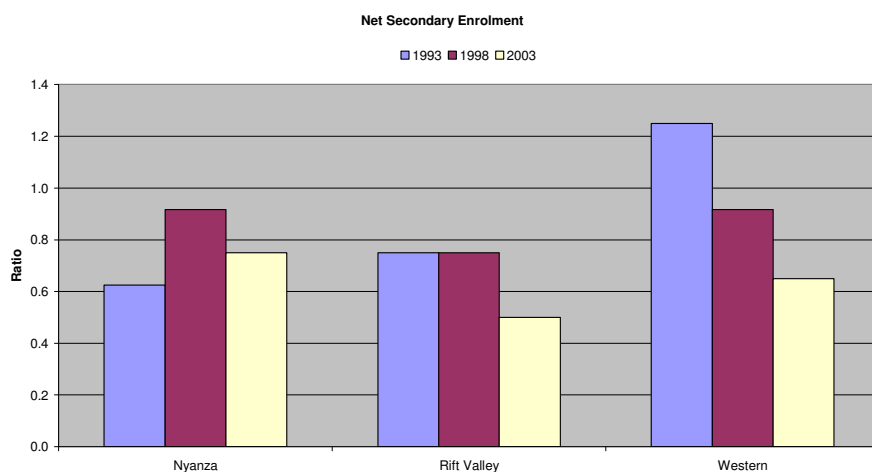


Figure 2: Ratio of regional coverage to Central province, 1993-2003





resources from Central to Rift Valley province' (2007: 37). This was exemplified by the new universities built under Moi, all of which went to Rift Valley or Nyanza and none to the Coast, Central or Eastern provinces. Nonetheless, Rift Valley remained significantly below Central Province in terms of electricity and education.

From Figure 2 it is apparent that there is no particular trend in HIs over time in the period 1993-2003, although there is evidence of some worsening in most indicators for the three regions between 1998 and 2003.

The data in Table 5 are particularly interesting in several respects: first, under five mortality is arguably one of the best indicators of overall wellbeing so HIs there are particularly undesirable; secondly, the asset ownership index is an indicator of private consumption (or economic wellbeing), so the sharp inequalities there are relevant to this dimension; thirdly, the HIs are significantly worse for girls education than for boys, which is a common finding across the world.

A comparison of government expenditure per capita across districts for 1999/2000 to 2003/4 shows that for this period spending per capita was below average for all districts in Central Province, Nyanza and Western and above average in Coast and Eastern provinces, while in the Rift Valley it was above average in some districts and

below in others (Kiringai 2007). In terms of poverty incidence, all districts in Central province showed below average poverty, all in Nyanza and Western above average, and Rift Valley districts were again divided (ibid).

Data for asset inequalities by region and ethnicity for 2003 is shown in Table 6.

Table 6: HIs in private assets^a

	Kikuyu/Kalenjin	Kikuyu/Luhya	Kikuyu/Luo
Rift Valley	1.96		
Nairobi	0.71	1.17	1.21
Western		2.98	
Nyanza			1.55
Total	2.07	1.56	1.27

Source: DHS 2003.

a: asset index is constructed as the sum of household ownership of five assets (television, car, motorbike, radio, refrigerator), with each asset weighted according to the proportion of the sample who do not own it.

From this we can see that:

(i) On aggregate the Kikuyu are significantly richer than each of the opposition groups. For each of the groups, there is a sharp difference within their dominant region as well as nationally, including between the Kikuyu/Kalenjin in the Rift Valley, where the current troubles are; this is partly due to inequalities in land ownership. In the Rift Valley the Kikuyu have almost twice the assets per head of the Kalenjin and they form a substantial proportion of the population (over 20%, while the Kalenjin account for just over 40%).

(ii) It is noteworthy, however, that the Kalenjin are richer than the Kikuyu in Nairobi – these are the elite Kalenjin, probably largely created in the Moi regime. For them, losing or gaining political power is particularly important since their elite positions may depend on it.

Thus we see that socioeconomic HIs favour the Kikuyu relative to the major opposition groups.

The 2007 elections

The divisions in Kenya following the 2007 elections are between supporters of Mwai Kibaki and supporters of Raila Odinga, the latter claiming that they have been cheated through election manipulations.

Investigation of voting intentions suggests that Kibaki supporters consist basically of the Kikuyu, while Odinga got his main support from the Kalenjin, Luo and most of the Luhya (Dercon 2008). The same conclusion emerges from an analysis of the 'official' register of how different regions voted in the presidential elections:

Table 7. Regional votes according to 'official' results.

Support for	% of votes cast in region			
	Central	Rift Valley	Nyanza	Western
Kibaki	97	33.5	16.9	32.2
Odinga	1.9	64.6	82.4	65.9
Others	1.1	1.9	0.7	0.7

Source: Electoral Commission of Kenya, <http://www.eck.or.ke/elections2007>

The bitterness of the reaction to the apparent rigging of the elections is due not only to the sense of being wronged, but also to the political marginalisation this will entail, which in turn is perceived as likely to reinforce existing socioeconomic inequalities. The sharp socioeconomic HIs in turn make it relatively easy for excluded leaders to mobilise support for violent opposition.

Some preliminary conclusions on HIs and politics in Kenya

A combination of socioeconomic and political inequalities thus appears to be at the root of the Kenyan crisis. Political power delivers important economic benefits for the politically dominant group³, as well as for the individuals who get power – this means that getting or losing political power is of very great importance to both group leaders and their supporters. Where the democratic process is not respected – probably for this same reason – it is then relatively easy to mobilise people even for violent resistance given the relative poverty of most groups, while the Kikuyu are potentially open to mobilisation to protect their relatively privileged position. Moreover, in Kenya the Rift Valley represents not only a geographic but also a political fault line, because it is here that two of the major groups meet, and that long-established land disputes and land inequities are most in evidence. Under Kenyatta, peace was maintained as a result of general prosperity and improvements in facilities and services (Klugman at al., 1999), while under Moi, the political dominance of the non-Kikuyu, notably the Kalenjin, was accompanied by economic advantages on the part of the Kikuyu, which allowed for peace to be sustained, despite a much less favourable macro-economic situation.⁴ The Kibaki regime involves political dominance for the Kikuyu and a relative concentration of socioeconomic benefits on this ethnic group. This nonetheless was acceptable when Kibaki had political legitimacy and opposition took a peaceful political form. But the belief that the election was stolen undermined this legitimacy, and also belief in the effectiveness of political opposition, and consequently non-Kikuyu acceptance of the situation. The presidential system itself is problematic in a multiethnic society, since it concentrates power on one person – and hence one ethnicity. This is why the agreement of February 28 2008 to Kofi Annan's proposal to add a powerful prime minister to the Kenyan presidential system should permit more distribution of power across ethnic groups, and thus reduce political HIs.

As Oyugi wrote in 2000 about ethnic politics in Kenya, in relation to ethnic clashes in the Rift Valley at the time:

Politicization of ethnicity often takes place in a situation characterized by an inequitable structure of access. Such a structure gives rise to the emergence of the "in group" and the "out group" with the latter trying to break the structure of inequality as the former responds by building barriers to access that ensure the continuation of its privileged position. At the centre of this scenario are the elites who, feeling excluded or threatened with exclusion,

³For example, there was a sharp shift in expenditure distribution under the Moi regime, compared with the Kenyatta regime, away from Central and Eastern provinces where Kenyatta's support was concentrated, towards Moi's political base in Rift Valley and Western provinces (Barkan and Chege, 1989).

⁴'The Kikuyu, during the Moi period have seen the costs of market disruption as more significant for them than the perceived gains associated with the seizure of state structures' ((Klugman, Neyapti et al. 1999)

begin to invoke ethnic ideology in the hope of establishing a "reliable" base of support to fight what is purely personal and/ or elite interests (Oyugi 2000: 6).

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