

## GRAFT | GLADWELL OTIENO

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OVER the decades, Kenya has accumulated a mountain of economic crimes which has largely remained unaddressed. The most serious attempts yet were made by President Kibaki's Government, under the leadership of Mr John Githongo, then Governance and Ethics Permanent Secretary, but they eventually foundered. Debate on this issue continues and has been an important aspect of the present electoral campaigns.

The Africa Centre for Open Governance, a civil society initiative that focuses on anti-corruption and governance, commissioned a survey to find out what people think about grand corruption and what they want done about it.

Presidential candidates have made various declarations on how they intend to treat past economic crime. ODM-Kenya's Mr Kalonzo Musyoka promotes the unconditional "forgive and forget" line. ODM's Mr Raila Odinga has at times promised radical action and at others offered the possibility of forgiveness after restitution of stolen wealth. President Kibaki, on the other hand, has generally maintained distance from discussions about corruption and preferred to focus on the achievements of his regime.

Responses to the survey made it clear that Kenyans do not support a "forgive and forget" strategy. It would be difficult for politicians to sneak a backroom elite bargain past voters, if any is contemplated.

The survey reveals that people view corruption as the issue of greatest concern. Fully 89 per cent of them rate corruption as a national priority concern: 97 per cent think that corruption is a "big" or "very big" problem.

A commentary on the Government's below par communication skills is the 25 per cent who are still unaware of official efforts to address corruption. Only 13 per cent of respondents spontaneously reported knowledge of the National Anti-Corruption Campaign. Only 23 per cent were aware of institutional efforts such as those of the Control

# Voters don't like plans to forgive past corruption

ler and Auditor General. However, 98 per cent knew about the Artur Brothers. Demonstrating the futility of efforts to suppress information was the 39 per cent of Kenyans who are aware of the Government-commissioned Kroll report and had strong opinions about it.

Asked to assess the performance of various Government efforts and initiatives on a scale of 1 to 10, many were uncompromising; none of them scored above the halfway mark. While 92 per cent were aware of the existence of the Kenya Anti-Corruption Commission they were so unimpressed that they gave it a score of only 3.7 out of 10.

Questioned as to what should be done about various corruption offences, people's responses ranged from confiscation of assets to prosecution and lengthy jail terms to the dismissal, or barring from public office of those guilty of corruption. Most think that wealth stolen and kept abroad, should be returned and used for health, education and other social welfare purposes. This shows that people attach a clear cost to graft and, in-

stead, see corruption and the loss of development opportunities as closely interlinked.

There was a marked perception of inequity and impunity in the treatment of prominent corruption offenders: 77 per cent said that there are sacred cows or "untouchables". Of the tiny minority (six per cent) who believed that there *should* be untouchables, fears on the potential for open ethnic conflict if prominent cases are pursued were cited, given the penchant of some suspects to seek refuge in their communities.

A full 93 per cent of Kenyans claim that they will not vote for a candidate who is widely perceived to be corrupt. Paradoxically, 48 per cent also said they would accept a bribe. Poverty and cynicism seem to be important motivators. However, 80 per cent said they had no intention of voting for the candidate whose bribes they would accept.

Respondents listed the types of bribes they were aware of as money, clothes, jobs and, interestingly, title deeds which only the Government can offer. From their comments, voters seem to be well aware that the goodies being lavished on them by the Government in various vot-

er-mollifying packages come with a price tag. All candidates should be aware that money spent on bribes is very likely money wasted, provided polling conditions are free and fair.

The aspect of the poll that receives the greatest public attention is people's assessment of which presidential candidate is most committed to fighting corruption. Perhaps inevitably this directly reflects the results of various polls to date on voters' preferred candidate overall.

A regional breakdown of the results shows all the candidates generally enjoying the "homeboy" advantage. However, Raila also leads in North Eastern, Western, Rift Valley, Coast and Nairobi. Raila's support base is strongest among younger voters who are particularly riled about corruption.

Interestingly, the poll shows that the candidates' positions are sometimes at variance with those of their own supporters. For example, 77 per cent of Kalonzo's supporters disagree with his "forgive and forget" stance; 36 per cent want the corrupt to face the full force of the law, lengthy jail terms and confiscation of property, 41 per cent were prepared to accept restitution and an apology. Forty-six per cent of Kibaki's supporters also support the more radical options.

Only a small minority are willing to contemplate the "forgive and forget" option; 7 per cent of Kalonzo's supporters, 6 per cent of Kibaki's and 5 per cent of Raila's.

What do they want the new Government to do about corruption? First, 94 per cent say the next President should not appoint any individuals who have a corruption record. Respondents also demanded the repossession of all illegally acquired property, the introduction of tough terms such as lengthy jail sentences; the immediate resignation of all those under investigation on corruption cases; proper vetting of Government appointees and "radical surgery of the Judiciary". Strong, focussed leadership will be necessary to respond to and manage these demands in an accountable and transparent manner.

## PALAVER

**W**hile speaking up for matatu operators, Assistant minister Mrs Betty Tett, picked on

what she may have thought was a frivolous Michuki rule. Requiring uniforms for touts doesn't do much for crime when all around them are hawker/gangsters in mufti. However, she may have overlooked the most important side-effect of requiring uniforms — making matatu touts less attractive to schoolgirls. Don't underestimate the ability of ugly maroon uniforms to keep Casanovas away from the industry!

Unable to return home in time to vote, but apparently interested in the best of both worlds, Palaver reader, Mr Peter Ngunjiri, is contemplating a scenario where President Kibaki gets the popular vote while Agwambo gets most seats in Parliament. What then? Well, we guess as a lame-duck president, Kibaki plays more golf and relaxes at *ikulu* while his people *bembelaza* Raila and his Orange House to pass Government business. Can you say *de facto* Prime Minister?

Water Assistant minister, Mr Raphael Wanjala has some explaining to do after *nyahunyos, pangas, swords and*



*runyus* were found in his GK car. He doesn't deny the car is his. Or that offensive weapons were found. His perplexing reaction is: "It's all propaganda!" Ah, yes, of course. That makes perfect sense.

*Those busy raging at Justice Richard Kwach and the ODM elections board over the nominations fiasco may want to hold their horses until the full story is out. Party sources have been telling the media the board didn't have the final say on anything. Then again they may have underestimated the passion with which politicians will pursue a seat in the Tenth Parliament.*

**And finally...**

*Thousands of people in China have protested on the streets and surrounded government offices demanding help recovering money from a get-rich-quick scheme to raise ants to make an aphrodisiac tonic. Sporadic clashes between police and the irate investors have broken out. Someone must be raising election funds.*

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## ECONOMY | NAOMI KLEIN

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## Globalism's shocks strike those most vulnerable

ROYAL Canadian Mounted Police officers shot and killed a Polish man in the Vancouver International Airport in October using a Taser.

In recent days, more details have come out about the man, Robert Dziekanski. It turns out that the 40-year-old didn't just die after being shocked — his life was marked by shock as well.

Dziekanski was a young adult in 1989, when Poland began a grand experiment called "shock therapy". The promise was that if the communist country accepted a series of brutal economic measures, the reward would be a "normal European country" like France or Germany. The pain would be short, the reward great.

So Poland's government eliminated price controls overnight, slashed subsidies, privatised industries. But for young workers such as Dziekanski, "normal" never arrived. Today, roughly 40 per cent of young Polish workers are unemployed. Dziekanski was among them. He had worked as a typesetter and a miner, but for the past few years he had been unem-

ployed and had had run-ins with the law. Like so many Poles of his generation, Dziekanski went looking for work in one of those "normal" countries that Poland was supposed to become but never did.

Two million Poles have joined this mass exodus during the past three years alone. Dziekanski's cohorts have gone to work as bartenders in London, doormen in Dublin, plumbers in France. Last month, he chose to follow his mother to British Columbia, which is in a pre-Olympics construction boom. After seven years of waiting, he arrived in his utopia, Vancouver. Ten hours later, he was dead.

Much of the outrage sparked by a video of the attack, made by another passenger at the airport, has focused on the controversial use of Tasers, already implicated in 17 deaths in Canada and many more in the United States. But what happened in Vancouver was about more than a weapon. It also was about an increasingly brutal side of the global economy.

Rapid economic transformations like Poland's have created enormous wealth — in new investment oppor-

tunities; currency trading; in leaner, meaner companies able to comb the globe for the cheapest location to manufacture. But from Mexico to China to Poland, they also have created tens of millions of discarded people, those who lose their jobs when factories close or their land when export zones open. Understandably, many of these people often choose to move: from countryside to city, from country to country. As Dziekanski appeared to be doing, they go in search of that elusive "normal".

But there isn't enough normal to go around, or so we are told. And so, as migrants move, they often are met with other shocks. A treacherous electrified fence on Spain's southern border, or a Taser gun on the US-Mexican border. Canada, which used to be known around the world for its openness to refugees, is militarising its borders, with the line between immigrant and terrorist blurring fast.

Dziekanski's inhuman treatment at the hands of the Canadian police must be seen in this context. The police were called when, lost and disoriented, he began shouting in Polish,

at one point throwing a chair. Faced with a foreigner such as Dziekanski, who spoke no English, why talk when you can shock? It strikes me that the same brutal, short-cut logic guided Poland's economic transition to capitalism: Why take the gradual route, which would require debate and consent, when "shock therapy" promised an instant, if painful, cure?

I realise that I am talking about very different kinds of shocks here, but they do interconnect in a cycle I call "the shock doctrine." First comes the shock of a national crisis, making countries desperate for any cure and willing to sacrifice democracy in the process.

Then comes the economic shock therapy, the undemocratic process pushed through in the window of crisis that jolts an economy into growth but blasts many people out of the picture.

Then, in far too many cases, there is the third shock, the one that disciplines and deals with the discarded people.

Each shock has the potential to kill, some more suddenly than others.