

# Power and Globalization in Africa: Perceptions of Barriers to Fair Economic Development in Kenya

*John Bosco Ngendakurio*

School of Humanities, Languages, and Social Science,

Griffith University, Brisbane, Australia

*johnbosco.ngendakurio@griffithuni.edu.au*

## Abstract

This article seeks to reveal the primary barriers to fair economic development based on Kenyans' perceptions of power and globalization. This search was initially sparked by the seeming disinterest of First World scholars to understand the reasons why poor countries benefit so little from the global market as reflected in a subsequent lack of a wide-ranging existing literature about the subject. The literature suggests that global capitalism is dominated by a powerful small elite, the so-called Transnational Capitalist Class (TCC), but how does this relate to Kenya and Africa in general? We know that the TCC has strong connections to financial capital and wealthy transnational corporations. It also pushes neo-liberalism, which becomes the taken-for-granted everyday language and culture that justifies state policies that result in a further class polarization between the rich and poor.

Using Kenya as a case study, this article draws on original qualitative research involving face-to-face interviews with Kenyan residents in different sectors who spoke freely about what they perceive to be Kenya's place in the world order. My interview results show that, on top of the general lack of economic power in the world order, the main barriers to Africa's performance are neo-colonial and imperialist practices, poor technology, poor infrastructure, general governance issues, and purchasing power.

## Keywords

economic development – globalization – power – purchasing power – world order

## 1 Introduction

To date, Africa faces serious issues of limited capital, high unemployment rates, and perpetual poverty (Okpara 2011:12). Such trends make it easier for foreign investors to operate in the continent free of meaningful local competition (Balasubramanyam 2015:21). Therefore, the Chinese and Indian presence in Africa has progressively increased in recent years. Chinese trade and investments in Africa quadrupled to \$172 billion between 2005 and 2015, heavily investing in commodities, construction, agriculture, and telecommunications. Its exports to Kenya alone rose to \$919 million in 2015, that is, a 30-percent growth from the previous year (Okumu and Fee 2019:366). Similarly, Kenya's telecommunication industry boom has seen India making huge profits, entering the market and announcing the biggest investments in the industry in recent years (TendersInfo 2008).

It is expected that economic globalization allows for increased competition and more productivity worldwide, leading to higher wages (Haase 2012:41). However, that is only possible with an active and effective civil society that can monitor the corporations and ensure they share the profits from increased productivities with their workers (Ibid). In the Kenyan context, locals are unable to meaningfully participate in high-level business activities, gaining little from many growing industries because they cannot compete with the cashed-up, technologically advanced and well-connected foreign investors (Meyer 2013:779). We know that corporate transnational interactions have significantly intensified in recent years, but has Africa, historically a prime site of classical imperialism, experienced this shift in the way international actors do business, from production systems and financial dealings to the worldwide dissemination of information (de Sousa Santos 2006:393)?

It is now argued that global capitalism is dominated by just a small elite, that is, the transnational capitalist class (TCC). Members of this class generally have strong connections to financial capital and wealthy transnational corporations (Peetz and Murray 2012:26–53). They continue to be profit-driven and are in a better position to achieve their financial goals, most of the time at the expense of the weakest in the chain (Sprague 2009:500). Such inequality of opportunity undermines the emancipatory potential of the traditional globalization, resulting in new class polarization between the strong and the weak actors (Sklair 2009:525). As history has shown, globalization has exclusively enabled the powerful, well-connected, and well-networked actors to fully benefit from global economic activities, working as a unit in real time (Hurst 2017:51). It can be understood that globalization is a form of capitalist expansion that paves a way for capital integration of local economies into global and unregulated

market economy, but does this mean the hegemonic and antagonistic relations that may already exist between the local and national economies will be exacerbated? This leads to my research question – what are the barriers to fair economic development in Kenya? The following literature review outlines the relationship between power, globalization, and Africa's performances, with a focus on Kenya.

## 2 A Literature Review

The central question this literature asks is what does the literature anticipate are the key barriers to economic development in Africa, particularly Kenya?

The power game is always zero-sum. It implies a clash of interests; that is, if one gains, another one loses (Dowding 2012:119). The possession or the lack of power leads to unidirectional and coercive relationships between actors where the powerful are in the position to get the weaker to do what they, otherwise, were not willing to do (Muehlenhoff 2016:292). Thus, power provides not only an entity to impose one's will on others, but it also makes it possible to resist internal and external pressures. Power requires resources. The rise of China, for example, stems from its more constructive role of the security systems and its advancing military technologies (Ducu 2014:116–117). In contrast, small states make up most of the international system, but their voices are reversely proportional to their combined size. Therefore, their weight and level of power do not pose any meaningful economic, strategic, or security threats to the world's most powerful actors (Kurecic et al. 2017:129).

Great powers seemingly operate anarchically without significant counterbalancing competitors. The United States, for example, has historically functioned as both the producer and the guardian of the world order. Its policymakers have fashioned a distinctively rule-based international order with or without the support of other states, based on US interests and self-survival. The world order is built on the partnership between European and Asian partnerships organized around open markets, security, and multilateral cooperation (Ikenberry 2005:134). Powerful states usually have what it takes to buy influence and their capacity to offer financial side benefits to other states remains significant in strategic international dealings (Davis 2008/2009:143). Great powers, united by military alliances, are more likely to trade with each other than with non-allies. They also tend to tie security alliances and economic agreements together, increasing security and economic exchanges simultaneously at the cost of the weaker states (Long and Leeds 2006:433).

Human capital, that is, education, experience, and skills, is a meaningful factor of entrepreneurial success around the world (Haase 2007:06). This is evidenced in the low level and quality of participation of developing countries such as African members of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade system (Apecu 2013). Taking the Kenyan smallholders as an example, the main challenge they face as they try to penetrate the local, regional, and global markets is the imperfect access to market information, a barrier they share with most developing countries (Mwema and Crewett 2019:142). The underlying factors shaping African countries' performances discussed in this literature review include neo-colonial and imperialist practices, poor technology and poor infrastructure, general governance issues, and purchasing power.

### 2.1 *Neo-Colonial and Imperialist Practices*

Neo-colonial and imperialist practices have had a negative impact on African countries' economic growth. The exploitation of African resources by external actors, particularly Europeans, has left the continent miserable (Ofosu-Mensah 2016:23). Consequently, the abundance of gold in Africa only holds limited promise for economic growth simply because wealth generated by it is repatriated by giant multinationals in control of the mining sector and related markets (Ibid). In his 2017 interview, Samir Amin argues that even with free trade and relatively more open borders, only multinationals benefit from globalization meaningfully from African resources. They easily move to where they can access cheap labor and extract the value produced in the peripheries to the benefit of the monopoly capital of the centers. Unequal exploitation is thus manifested in unequal exchange (Kafakurinani et al. 2017:13).

There is a correlation between migration and development. According to Rubin Patterson (2009/2010:218), Sweden, Italy, and Ireland were poor and famine-stricken in the 1850s. Therefore, one in six Swedish citizens relocated to the US in the period between 1870 and 1910 while half of the Irish and a third of the Italian population fled their respective homelands. These migrants expanded their human, economic, and social capital overseas and, subsequently, reinvested some of this capital in their home countries, a move that changed their economic situation significantly (Ibid). But we know how hard it is for Africans to secure entry visas, especially to the West. This population group is seen as unstable and, therefore, regardless the supporting documents provided to the immigration authorities in industrialized countries, their visas applications are usually rejected (Anyangwe 2015).

While the discovery of natural resources is a blessing in industrialized countries, their presence in Africa is generally a curse. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), for example, natural resources have contributed to the onset

and duration of one of the longest conflicts in Africa. As Dan Fahey (2011:1) puts it, the war in the DRC involves numerous international conflicts taking place in the same geographic area, with the natural resources as the main trigger. In the Kenya context, the indigenous communities have been forced to vacate their traditional land to create room for World Bank-funded projects, such as the generation of power. This is just one example of a generation-long pain and hardships faced by the indigenous communities who lose the connection to their traditional land and general livelihoods (Koissaba 2013). Similarly, a study by Laurence Juma (2013:211) suggests that development-induced displacements undermine the rights of indigenous Kenyans and that there is a general lack of interest in the national and international legal frameworks for their protection.

Contrary to the literature above, some studies indicate that open markets have improved life standards of Africans. Farmers have improved their financial position by forging collaborations with agribusiness and this partnership has enabled even smallholder farmers to gain access to global markets (Brett 2016). The introduction of modern practices in agriculture and the fish-poultry integrated systems in Africa improves locals' livelihoods by boosting their income and improving general food security (Shoko et al. 2019:22–23). However, Filippa Pyk and Assem A. Hatab's (2018) study concludes that getting African farmers to a high-value agricultural food supply chain remains a big challenge. Sub-Saharan African farmers have yet to achieve structural transformation towards sustainable agricultural practices, a move that would see them accessing high-value chain and good paying markets in the developed world (pg. 2). Similarly, Eija Soini (2005) concluded that one of the reasons why Tanzanian farmers' living standards do not improve is the low coffee price in the world market, making traditional coffee farming unprofitable (pg. 157).

The unprofitability of African products does not only stem from low prices in the global market, but also the flooding of the local markets by foreign investors. For example, as cheap imports flood the Somali markets, the country's traditional textile industry is on the brink of extinction. The Somali Government has no capacity to revive, empower, or inspire African designs into the local markets (Muisyo and Ibrahim 2018). On the other hand, foreign traders, including but not limited to business actors from the European and North American countries, continue to send excessive amounts of second-hand clothes to Africa. While this practice is credited for clothing the poor, it is also criticized for undermining an already struggling textile industry in countries like Rwanda (The Economist 2018:63).

While the European Union historically employs conditionalities in their dealings with their African trading partners, China has been more flexible

in their trading arrangements and the latter has become the most preferred trading partner in Africa (Awuah 2019:253). Such conditions have triggered anxiety within Europe, forcing the European Union to rethink their form of diplomatic relations with Africa and turning the continent into a battlefield between the West and the East for raw materials (Awuah 2019:253). Equally, the intensified trade and diplomatic activities between China and Africa are linked to Chinese energy and oil diplomacy. With Chinese rapid economic growth, the shortage of natural resources is inevitable and the steady supply of these resources defines the current relationship between Africa and China (Wang and Zou 2014:1113).

Even with unequal and imbalanced trade relations between China and Africa, most Africans prefer a Chinese presence. At least with China, they argue, Africa gets meaningful outcomes – China provides the continent with much-needed products and technologies, building the continent's capacity by improving infrastructure and boosting the manufacturing sector. More importantly, China treats Africans with more respect (Grammaticas 2012). Africans do not see themselves as the victims of Chinese economic exploitation. As President Paul Kagame of Rwanda put it during the 2018 Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), most African heads of governments view the cooperation between China and Africa as based on mutual respect and for the benefit of both partners (Maru 2019). Similarly, a report by Nick Van Mead (2018) suggests that at least two-thirds of Tanzanians are more optimistic with the Chinese infrastructure investments in what they feel is a win-win situation.

## 2.2 *Poor Infrastructure and Poor Technology*

Kevin Zhang (2010) argues that the African continent's poor economic outcomes are generally a result of poor investment in infrastructure, rendering an inability to produce and export goods and services (pg. 502). All sectors are affected, from energy, health, education, and transport to communication services, causing persistent sluggish economic growth in the continent (Kuada 2013). A study by Ombara Isaac (2019) assessed Kenya's transport infrastructure in terms of strengths, challenges, opportunities, and initiatives designed to reduce mitigating gaps. It concluded that transport structural gaps remain a serious handicap to growth and poverty reduction not only in Kenya, but the entire East Africa (pg. 200).

Air transport also faces significant barriers in many African countries, especially those with major security challenges such as Somalia. The ongoing fighting implies that the limited resources available are systematically

destroyed. Islamic extremism has grown bigger and terrorists have continuously staged attacks in the capital city and beyond (BBC 2012). For Africa to prosper, there must be structural changes involving strengthening the manufacturing and infrastructure sectors. As Vuyo Mjimba (2019) puts it, Africa could get more from its natural resources by building industries and infrastructures to service mines. Failure to do so has opened doors for multinational firms from Europe, North America, and more recently China, to refine most of African minerals with minimal roles and limited profits for Africans.

Information and communication technology (ICT) plays a great role in strengthening tourism development. It enables direct promotions of local touristic opportunities in international markets, avoiding heavy reliance on foreign intermediaries and associated costs (Adeola and Evans 2019:2). While some efforts are being made to elevate Africa in terms of ICTs, the basic systems for leveraging these programs remain fragmented and uncoordinated (Kuada 2013). The thesis by Muhammadou M.O. Kah (1999) analyzed the relationship between telecommunications, information technology (IT), and economic growth in Africa, using Gambia as a case study. This study pointed to a positive relationship between development in IT and economic growth in Gambia. The major challenges outlined in this study included inadequate IT human capital, insufficient private and public investment, limited support for the private sector to invest in IT, and the lack of knowledge about the strategic use of IT to improve business processes and economic efficiency (pg. 1). The first impression of Njeri Wamukonya's (2007) study indicated that the solar home systems in Africa are effective and related projects are cost-effective. They meet demands and help in reducing poverty to some extent. However, deeper analysis revealed that most of the targets remain unmet, prompting a call to use funds on more appropriate technologies and initiatives to improve governance, another area of concern in Africa (pg. 6).

### 2.3 *General Governance Issues*

Despite evidence suggesting that Africa is full of potential, the continent remains the poorest on earth. Ibrahim Farah et al. (2013) argue that African leaders and policymakers must foster accountability to both their citizens and the international community, and this requires a high level of maturity and readiness to adopt a self-critical analysis of problems and possible solutions (pg. 213). Andrew M. Kerandi's (2016) study came to the same conclusion that poor economic performance in most developing countries is attributed to bad governance, including severe institutional and managerial weaknesses in the private and public sector in what has progressively become a crisis (pg. 1).

Good governance attracts foreign investments as it makes a good foundation for governments' effectiveness, control of corruption, political stability, peace and security, rule of law, and accountability (Bosire 2019:169). Some African countries have initiated reforms that tackle the issue of governance to improve accountability and reduce corruption, often under the pressure of international financial community such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. However, these initiatives have largely failed, leaving societies with the same history of corruption, deficiencies in healthcare and educational systems (Soobaroyo et al. 2017:422).

Corruption in Kenya is featured in every daily interaction between Kenyans, from the police and public servants to the elaborate networks of influence linking the state and commercial sector (Harrington and Manji 2013:4). For example, the UK was left with no option but to withdraw its financial aid after audits revealed a large amount of money had been diverted from its intended purpose in 2010 (Ibid). Corruption persists because there are powerful people who benefit from it. As such, unaccountability and impunity have become key features of the Kenyan society (Hope, Sr. 2014:393). A small elite have enriched themselves while the rest, that is most Kenyans, remain poor (Ibid:394).

#### 2.4 *Poverty and Purchasing Power*

Africa faces extreme poverty. The 2015 World Bank's report on the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) concluded that extreme poverty has been in decline in all regions in the world except for Sub-Saharan Africa (Asongu and Roux 2019:457). At least 48 percent of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are off track from achieving the MDGs targets (Ibid). Jeffrey D. Sachs et al. (2004:117) state that African development crisis is unique in character. The continent is not only the poorest in the world, but it is also the only developing region that registered a negative growth in income per capita in the period between 1980 and 2000. The continent faces increased income inequality, which has negative impacts on its prospect for inclusive growth. African countries register the highest rates of unemployment, particularly within the youth (Oluwatayo 2018:60).

Africa's average citizens cannot afford even basic items such as food. A study by Quentin Wodon and Hassan Zaman (2009/2010) indicates that the spike in global food prices in 2008 impacted food prices in the developing world. Their evidence suggests that rising food prices are likely to lead to higher poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa because the impact on net consumers outweighs the benefits to local food producers. While other regions implemented subsidies as a policy response, Sub-Saharan African governments reduced taxes on food,

which did not help the poor, but did help the rich importers who were not necessarily locals. The poor became poorer and the rich became richer (pg. 157). Oliver Balch (2017) argues that foreign multinationals operating in the farming and food industries in Africa have an upper hand in their business dealings simply because they have a lot of spending power and Africans do not. The methodology applied in this study was designed to uncover Kenyans' understanding of key barriers African countries face in their development pursuit.

### 3 Methods

Qualitative methodology, that is, studying cases in their real-life context by applying multiple sources of data collection (Kabranian-Melkonian 2015:717) was used in this research. This methodology made it easier to understand cultural and political sensitivities and nuances that could have created ethical and methodological challenges (Ibid).

Snowballing techniques were used and this involved a process of reference from one participant to another. This enabled the researcher to create a network of participants with a sound level of endorsement and pre-established trust, a practice that smoothed the entire process given the level of political and cultural sensitivities in Kenya.

A great number of Kenyan citizens and foreign residents of Kenya with direct knowledge of the foreign aid scheme and processes, either as humanitarian workers, officials, or beneficiaries showed interest in the topic. Fifty-seven people from different sectors such as average citizens, local leaders, senior government officials, NGO's senior staff, academics, university students, migrant workers, senior military officials and diplomats, senior executives in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, domestic workers, homeless people, religious leaders, etc. participated in semi-structured and recorded interviews.

The consent process involved a guarantee that the discussions and the identities of participants would be protected at all the times, and this enabled participants to talk freely about their experiences and knowledge about foreign aid and Kenya's place in the world order.

The results of the qualitative interviews presented here have been chosen as being the most relevant to evaluate what Kenyans think are the main barriers to Kenyan development and the country's participation in the global economy. The interviewees demonstrate the underlying factors of Kenyans' in/ability to effectively do business with the international community and their views informed the results and discussions in this study.

## 4 Results and Discussion

The qualitative results of the Kenyan citizens and Kenyan residents' own accounts are triangulated with the material from primary and secondary sources to weigh the impact of the main underlying factors shaping Africa countries' performance on a global scale, including neo-colonial and imperialist practices, poor technology and poor infrastructure, general governance issues, and purchasing power.

### 4.1 *Neo-Colonial and Imperial Practices*

To put the interviews into context, it is assumed by the literature that imperialist and neo-colonial practices have had a negative impact on African countries' economic growth although there are theories that suggest it is otherwise, that is, that the global market is being used to positively enhance indigenous opportunities. For example, Chris Brett (2016) suggests that farmers in Africa have improved their financial position by forging collaborations with agribusiness, arguing that this partnership has enabled even smallholder farmers to gain access to global markets. Similarly, the study conducted by Amon Shoko et al. (2019) suggests that the introduction of modern practices in agriculture and the fish-poultry integrated systems in Africa, including Kenya, improves locals' livelihoods by boosting their income and improving general food security (pp. 22–23).

While both Brett (2016) and Shoko et al. (2019) were correct to some extent, at least in terms of more productions and better access to the global market, my evidence suggests that profits are not being made ultimately by the African farmers, and that they are tricked into engaging in unfair trade.

My first interviewee is an economist who lectures at one of the universities in Nairobi. He answers the above by arguing that African products are strategically under-priced.

... So, I grow my coffee and the buyer who is from the Northern Hemisphere, ah, Germany or wherever ... decides 'This is the price they are going to buy [pay]'. They don't know the cost of production, they don't care [about] the cost of production, but they have decided that they are the ones who are going to control the price. So, control of the price is one very difficult way in which we are exploited and because we don't know, they say, 'Oh, if you don't sell [the product to] me, I will buy it from Ethiopia, eh, I will buy it from Tanzania, I will buy it from Brazil.' Then I panic. (Voice 3, Dec. 6, 2018).

To easily under-price African products, Interviewee (3) indicates that African farmers are tricked into over-production, flooding the local markets:

So, we are all told to grow and then the market is flooded. When the market is flooded, they decide what they will pay and that has always been the case. (Ibid).

Interviewee (7) holds the same views as Interviewee (3), but she states that the flooding of the local market is a result of cheap items imported into Kenya:

We open our market, then they flood our markets and we become dependent on their things ... Our cotton industry is dying ... They dump clothes, they dump cars. Now, they are dumping sugar in our country ... The Chinese are now dumping fish in our country and we have all these things ... So, they have ways, they develop ways to, to make sure that we stay there [pointing to the floor] (Voice 7, Dec. 10, 2018).

Interviewees (3) and (7) express views that align with the findings in Victor Muisyo and Mohammed Ibrahim's (2018) report suggesting that cheap imports flood the African markets, putting traditional textile industry at a high risk for extinction. But my evidence also suggests that, on top of flooding the local markets, Kenyans are forced to sell raw material to foreign industries cheaply.

Interviewee (2) is a professor of economics and a local civil society activist who explains this:

... The WTO [World Trade Organization] does not allow Third World countries to sell finished products. We always sell raw products – coffee, tea, sugar cane. Whatever it is, they want it raw: minerals, oil ... Kenya is getting some oil, but we are not being allowed to process it here ... (Voice 2, Dec. 06, 2018).

Besides, my sample points to a practice where products are taken from Africa by a range of foreign investors, are repackaged and sold back to locals. Interviewee (6) explains:

... We have a lot that they need. But the fact that we are meant to believe that we cannot manufacture for instance. How do you ... pack tea from the farms in Kenya, transport it to somewhere else and re-package it nicely, and then they sell it back to you? (Voice 6, Dec 7, 2018).

The views expressed by Interviewees (2) and (6) are supported by the study by Weimu You et al. (2018:252), which found that, in respect to global value chains, African actors only play minor roles with very limited value capture in those chains where they typically supply raw material or low-value products. African actors are therefore strategically forced into situations where they remain outsiders in the global economy.

#### 4.2 *Poor Technology and Poor Infrastructure*

Poor technology and the poor condition of infrastructure disadvantages Kenya, making it harder to move goods and services even within its own borders. In their study, Urbain T. Yogo and Audrey Verdier-Chouchane (2015) state that an adequate supply of infrastructure services is a crucial element of productivity and economic growth. They argue that infrastructure investments improve competitiveness and access to markets. Unfortunately, Yogo and Verdier-Chouchane suggest there has been a lack of reliable infrastructure in Africa, leading to underdevelopment in the continent (pg. 274). Inadequate infrastructure makes it practically hard to move goods even within Kenya. For example, while the Turkana area is rich in natural resources (oil), the area has been so neglected that roads are either non-existent or damaged. Manyara (2012) suggests that this is because the district, or Northwest Kenya in general, has been neglected and marginalized by the colonial administration and post-independence governments for decades.

Evidence from my sample confirms Manyara's hypothesis, but goes a bit further to explain why some areas are marginalized:

Eh, but, let me tell you how, in Kenya, it works: If you are in Government, you, you reward your people. If I am a Kikuyu, chances are that many of my friends are Kikuyus ... So, if you look areas within Kikuyu region, you realise that they have very good roads – Kikuyu and [the] Rift Valley ... (Voice 10, Dec. 11, 2019).

The views expressed by Interviewee (10) align with those of Leslie Sklair (2009:531) who argues that privileged indigenous groups and those who conduct business of government in poor countries are knowingly or unknowingly local agents for foreign domination. Besides, while the views of Interviewee (2) align with those of Interviewee (10), Interviewee (2) suggests that infrastructure projects are initiated, but the main problem is the way they are procured, causing more harm than benefits to Kenya.

... Infrastructure development helps the population to, including housing, to improve their, their mobility, access to market, ah, electricity and so on. So, that way you get ... the population is relieved in that way. Eh, but, we have seen how infrastructure development is procured. [it is] procured in a corrupt way. So, the cost of paying debt is higher than the benefit. Yeah, it outweighs the benefits (Voice 2, Dec. 06, 2018).

Asked why he believes the procurement process is corrupt, Interviewee (2) gives the following details:

... So, you have [an] infrastructure development that is overpriced ... by the country itself because the people engaging in these contractual processes want kickbacks and so the kickback is put into the contract and then they make their money. So, the project continues, but we pay more than what the value of that infrastructure development (Ibid).

Interviewee (2) goes further and explains that Kenya has no chance to compete on the global market because the country is poor and lacks adequate technology. He explains:

They always get excuses. For example, 'you don't have skills to process.' You don't have skills, you don't have technology. And for you to buy, ah, like a coffee processing technology, you might end up selling your country (Ibid).

However, Interviewee (7) disagrees, arguing that Kenyans are very good with technology, if given the right opportunity and proper funding:

When it comes to technology, people are doing wonders. We even have telephone farmers and all that, leave alone the M-Pesa [Instant money transfer services through mobile phones], which is a global thing (Voice 7, Dec. 10, 2018).

My evidence suggests that there is a range of opportunities in Kenya, but for the country's performance on a global scale to improve, the problem of poverty, the systematic draining of Kenya's public resources, and improved governance of the public good must be addressed.

### 4.3 *General Governance Issues*

Corruption hinders Kenyan development. Kempe R. Hope, Sr. (2014) states that corruption shape all sectors affecting Kenyans' life. Institutions, which should regulate the relationships between citizens and the state, are being used for the personal enrichment of public officials, including politicians and bureaucrats (pg. 493).

Evidence given by my sample suggests that Hope, Sr. is correct. Interviewee (1) is an active civil society activist, and he states:

... In the recent past, there is a number of senior government officials who have been led in[to] court accused of looting the country, so with that one, I could confidently say that there is a lot of corruption and mismanagement of public funds (Voice 1, Dec. 05, 2018).

Corruption in Kenya is not a new phenomenon. Since the colonial era, the country has progressively become a 'man-eat-man' society. For example, immediately after independence, the newly established African administration expropriated the land from white settlers, but it never went back to the traditional owners. It was shared among the new Kenyan political elite. Interviewee (10) explains:

Unfortunately, we inherited all the bad, all the bad laws of colonialism instead of coming up, I would say, with our own because it was built on, I would say, 'man-eat-man' type society and we never did away with [abolished] that. The colonialists came in and took land from Kenyans and distributed it back to themselves. So, these were like ten percent of the population. Then, when the colonialists left, this land never went back to the original owners (Voice 10, Dec. 11, 2018).

My sample suggests that some reforms are necessary, but not through identity politics. As Interviewee (5) puts it, Kenyans should not expect foreign actors, including the TCC, to protect Kenyan national interests. It is the duty of Kenyans to do so.

I think it is upon [the Kenyan] people to legitimately be moral and make sure that some of these things are for the good of the society as opposed to for self-interests ... I think [that] at the end of the day, as making sure that we have audits in people's properties and everybody will have to explain how they acquired such wealth for instance (Voice 5, Dec. 06, 2018).

Apart from a few elites, the Kenyan society is generally poor, with limited purchasing power.

#### 4.4 *Purchasing Power*

Despite remarkable efforts to reduce poverty in Kenya, such as initiatives designed to improve food production, access to the global market, and local infrastructure, evidence suggests that Kenyans remain some of the poorest people on earth. Fredrick O. Odhiambo (2019) writes that poverty in Kenya continues to affect every aspect of life. He argues that even if recent evidence suggests a reduction in poverty globally, there are more than 700 million people living on less than \$1.90 a day and that developing countries are still worst hit by extreme poverty (pg. 452). Similarly, in his study, Abd Elrhman Elzahi Saaid Ali (2017) found that poverty leads to more disadvantages for the people of Kenya (pg. 2208). Richmond Atta-Ankomah's study (2016) came to the same conclusions where he argues that despite very rapid growth, absolute poverty levels and unemployment in Kenya and sub-Saharan Africa remain high (pg. 397).

This literature also shows that Kenyans' financial position does not allow them to effectively participate in the global economy simply because they are generally poor even though they have the raw materials for a wealthy economy if redistributed wisely, not for the TCC or national elites, as Interviewee (2) suggests below:

... Now you have, ah, ah, a citizen whose purchasing power is low ... So, when the purchasing power is low, then all this production ... you have a society whose life style is thin. So, they cannot consume as much as is being produced ... Kenyan goods are no longer penetrating the market. They are there, but it is no longer 100 percent. It has come below 50 percent. So, you see what has happened (Voice 2, Dec. 06, 2018).

According to Interviewee (7), poverty in Kenya has become a barrier to economic participation, particularly within young people. Even banks cannot trust young people and, therefore, they are unlikely to be able to access loans.

... and of course getting loans in Kenya is quite difficult, especially right now ... You might have the [transaction] history, but most banks they need collateral. So, if it is collateral, they will need land. Most often it is a vehicle [or] things like that and you don't have it ... [for] most of the youth in Kenya, if it is land, you are talking about your ancestral land and there

is no way your parent is going to give you the title deed to [of] your land and say 'okay, go get a loan' (Voice 7, Dec. 10, 2018).

The statements by Interviewee (7) align with Mary Karumba and Martin Wafula's (2012) findings indicating that the land-related assets are the most utilized as collateral in Kenya. They argue that as the land system has unique challenges, the clearing of the land-related assets is very slow, complex in nature, and costly (pg. 4).

## 5 Conclusion

Most of what the critical literature review covered was reiterated by the interviewees – globalization, following on the heels of centuries of European imperialism, has brought the conditions that make power, interests, and self-survival central. Poor countries, leached of their resources over centuries, economic, social, and political, have had to succumb to sporadic growth, causing turmoil and widening the gap between the rich and the poor.

African countries continue to fail by criteria set up by globalized international capitalist community. They attempt to become meaningful players in the capitalist world order, but the reality is that they are unable to compete because they are exploited losers in a system that has only a few winners – the dominant global powers.

A range of influencing factors were discussed, including neo-colonial practices by greater powers. Neo-colonial and imperialist practices imply that African actors are intentionally and strategically forced to remain as outsiders in the global economy. Kenya also faces issues of corruption and bad governance with a small elite enriching itself at the expense of the rest of Kenyans and creating a wider gap between the rich and poor. Extreme poverty leads to a lack of purchasing power. Furthermore, poor technology and poor infrastructures continue to disadvantage the country, making it harder to move goods and services even within its own borders.

## Acknowledgements

Many people and institutions have contributed to this work, and I am grateful for their support, particularly my PhD supervisors Associate Professor Georgina Murray, Professor David Peetz, and Professor Susan Harris Rimmer. Special thanks go to Fr. Deogratias M. Rwezaura, Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS)

East Africa, His Excellency Libérat Mfumukeko, the Secretary General of the East African Community and Hekima University for their help during data collection in Kenya.

### Disclosure Statement

There is no financial interest or benefit that has arisen from the direct applications of this research.

### References

- Adeola, Ogechi and Olaniyi Evans. 2019. "ICT, infrastructure, and tourism development in Africa." *Tourism Economics*:1–18.
- Ali, Abd Elrhman Elzahi Saaid. 2017. "The Challenges Facing Poverty Alleviation and Financial Inclusion in North-East Kenya Province (NEKP)." *International Journal of Social Economics* 44(12):2208–2223.
- Anyangwe, Eliza. 2015. "Why is travelling with an African Passport so difficult?" *The Guardian*. September 11. (<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/sep/11/african-passport-europe-struggle-borders>).
- Apecu, Joan. 2013. "The Level of African Engagement at the World Trade Organization from 1995 to 2010." *International Development Policy|Revue internationale de politique de développement* 4.2:29–67.
- Asongu, Simplicé A. and Sara Le Roux. 2019. "Understanding Sub-Saharan Africa's Extreme Poverty Tragedy." *International Journal of Public Administration* 42(6): 457–467.
- Atta-Ankomah, Richmond. 2016. "Chinese Technologies and Pro-poor Industrialisation in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Case of Furniture Manufacturing in Kenya." *European Journal of Development Research* 28(3):397–413.
- Awuah, Michael A. 2019. "Raw materials diplomacy and extractives governance: The influence of the EU on the African extractive industry space." *South African Journal of International Affairs* 26(2):251–275.
- Balasubramanyam, V.N. 2015. "China and India's Economic Relations with African Countries – Neo-Colonialism Eastern Style?" *Journal of Chinese Economic and Business Studies* 13(1):17–31.
- Balch, Oliver. 2017. "For Africa's farmers it's government, not big business, that is key." *The Guardian*. January 18. (<https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2017/jan/18/agriculture-africa-role-multinationals>).

- BBC. 2012. "Somalia: Turkish Airlines begins Flights to Mogadishu." BBC Africa. March 6. (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-17269620>).
- Bosire, Eric M. 2019. "Foreign Direct Investments into Eastern Africa Region: The Governance Paradox." *International Journal of Economics and Financial Issues* 9(1):169–182.
- Brett, Chris. 2016. "Mutual Benefit for Farmers and Agribusiness." *African Business May*(430).
- Davis, Christina L. 2008/2009. "Linkage Diplomacy: Economic and Security Bargaining in the Anglo-Japanese alliance, 1902–23." *International Security* 33(3):143–179.
- de Sousa Santos, Boaventura. 2006. "Globalizations." *Theory, Culture & Society* 23(2–3): 393–399.
- Dowding, Keith. 2012. "Why should we care about the definition of power?" *Journal of Political Power* 5(1):119–135.
- Ducu, D.S. 2014. "The impact of Ukraine crisis on China's position in the international arena." International Scientific Conference "Strategies XXI," 1, 116.
- Fahey, Dan. 2011. "Rethinking the Resource Curse: Natural Resources and Polywar in the Ituri District, Democratic Republic of the Congo." UC Berkeley. ProQuest ID: (Fahey\_berkeley\_0028E\_11753. Merritt ID: ark:/13030/m5tb4bd9. Retrieved from <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/320469nv>).
- Farah, Ibrahim, Hawa Noor, Charles Kisame, and Khadija Hussein. 2013. "Security, Governance and Regional Integration: Issues in today's Africa." *Development* 56(3):321–327.
- Grammaticas, Damian. 2012. "Chinese colonialism?" BBC Asia. July 19. (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-18901656>).
- Guttal, Shalmali. 2007. "Globalisation." *Development in Practice* 17(4–5):523–531.
- Haase, Dwight. 2007. "Closing the Gender Gap." *Journal of Microfinance/ESR Review* 9(2):Article 3.
- Haase, Dwight. 2012. "The wealth (and want) of nations: The impact of economic globalization on the developing world." *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology* 11(1):38–49.
- Harrington, John and Ambreena Manji. 2013. "Satire and the Politics of Corruption in Kenya." *Social & Legal Studies* 22(1):3–23.
- Hope, Sr., Kempe R. 2014. "Kenya's corruption problem: Causes and consequences." *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 52(4):493–512.
- Hurst, Ellen. 2017. "Local villages and global networks: The language and migration experiences of African skilled migrant academics." *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 15(1):50–67.
- Ikenberry, G. John. 2005. "Power and liberal order: America's postwar world order in transition." *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 5(2):133–152.

- Isaac, Ombara. 2019. "Transport Infrastructure Development in Kenya: How Connectivity Impacts Eastern Africa Regional Integration." *Insight on Africa* 11(2): 200–218.
- Juma, Laurence. 2013. "Protection of development-induced internally displaced persons under the African Charter: The case of the Endorois community of Northern Kenya." *The Comparative and International Law Journal of Southern Africa* 46(2):211–233.
- Kabranian-Melkonian, Seta. 2015. "Ethical Concerns with Refugee Research." *Journal of Human Behaviour in the Social Environment* 25(7):714–722.
- Kah, Muhammadou M.O. 1999. "An econometric analysis of telecommunications, information technology, and economic growth in Africa: A case study of the Gambia." ProQuest Information and Learning Company & Stevens Institute of Technology. Pp. 1–10.
- Karumba, Mary and Martin Wafula. 2012. "Collateral Lending: Are there Alternatives for the Kenyan Banking Industry?" Kenya Bankers Association. WPS/03/12:4. ([https://www.kba.co.ke/downloads/Working\\_Paper\\_WPS\\_03\\_12\[2\].pdf](https://www.kba.co.ke/downloads/Working_Paper_WPS_03_12[2].pdf)).
- Koissaba, Ben O. 2013. "Maasai in Kenya go to courts to stop evictions caused by World Bank's geothermal power project." Cultural Survival. June 12. (<https://www.culturalsurvival.org/news/maasai-kenya-go-courts-stop-evictions-caused-world-banks-geothermal-power-project>).
- Kerandi, Andrew M. 2008. Governance Agenda for Sub-Saharan Africa: Issues and Challenges. *Federal Governance* 5(1):1–22.
- Kuada, John. 2013. "Infrastructure and development in Africa." *African Journal of Economic and Management Studies* 4(1).
- Kufakurinani, Ushehewedu, Ingrid H. Kvangraven, Frutuoso Santana, and Maria D. Styve. 2017. *Dialogues on Development, Volume 1 – On Dependency*. Institute for New Economic Thinking. Pp. 13–14.
- Kurecic, Petar, Goran Kozina, and Filip Kokotović. 2017. "Revisiting the definition of small state through the use of relational and quantitative criteria." 19th International Scientific Conference on Economic and Social Development, Melbourne, Australia, February.
- Long, Andrew G. and Brett A. Leeds. 2006. "Trading for Security: Military Alliances and Economic Agreements." *Journal of Peace Research* 43(4):433–451.
- Manyara, R. 2012. "New analysis: Insecurity, poor infrastructure hinder investments in northwest Kenya." Xinhua News Agency.
- Maru, Mehari T. 2019. "Why Africa loves China." Aljazeera. January 6. (<https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/africa-loves-china-190103121552367.html>).
- Meyer, Dorothea. 2013. "Exploring the duality of structure and agency – the changing dependency paradigms of tourism development on the Swahili coast of Kenya and Zanzibar." *Current Issues in Tourism* 16(7–8):773–791.

- Mjimba, Vuyo. 2019. "Africa can get more from its minerals by building industries to services mines." *The Conversation*. October 8. (<http://theconversation.com/africa-can-get-more-from-its-minerals-by-building-industries-to-service-mines-104166>).
- Muehlenhoff, Hanna L. 2016. "Ambiguities of power: Struggle and resistance in (the relations between) Turkey and the European Union." *Cooperation and Conflict* 51(3):291–306.
- Muisyo, Victor and Mohammed Ibrahim. 2018. "Somalia's traditional textiles fray at the seams as cheap imports flood markets." *African News*. May 26. (<https://www.africanews.com/2018/05/26/somalia-s-traditional-textiles-fray-at-the-seams-as-cheap-imports-flood-markets/>).
- Mwema, Catherine and Wibke Crewett. 2019. "Institutional analysis of rules governing trade in African leafy vegetables and implications for smallholder inclusion: Case of schools and restaurants in rural Kenya." *Journal of Rural Studies* 67:142–151.
- Odhiambo, Fredrick O. 2019. "Assessing the Predictors of Lived Poverty in Kenya: A Secondary Analysis of the Afrobarometer Survey 2016." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 54(3):452–464.
- Ofori-Mensah, Emmanuel A. 2016. "Mining in Colonial Ghana: Extractive Capitalism and Its Social Benefits in Akyem Abuakwa under Nana Ofori Atta I." *Africa Today* 63(1):23.
- Okpara, John O. 2011. "Special issue on small business development and poverty alleviation in Africa." *Management Research Review* 34(2):12–25.
- Okumu, Charles O. and Anthony Fee. 2019. "Understanding the impacts of Chinese business activity in Kenya from the perspective of locals: An exploratory field study." *Critical Perspectives on International Business* 15(4):361–389.
- Oluwatayo, Isaac B. and Ojo Ayodeji. 2018. "Walking through a tightrope: The challenge of economic growth and poverty in Africa." *The Journal of Developing Areas* 52(1):59–69.
- Patterson, Rubin. 2009/2010. "The migration-development model can serve two masters: The transnational capitalist class and national development." *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology* 8(2–3):211–229.
- Peetz, David and Georgina Murray. 2012. "The financialization of global corporate ownership." Pp. 26–53 in *Financial Elites and Transnational Business: Who Rules the World?* Edited by Georgina Murray and John Scott. UK: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.
- Pyk, Filippa and Assem A. Hatab. 2018. "Fairtrade and Sustainability: Motivations for Fairtrade Certification among Smallholder Coffee Growers in Tanzania." *Sustainability* 10(5):1551.
- Sachs, Jeffrey D., John W. McArthur, Guido Schmidt-Traub, Margaret Kruk, Chandrika Bahadur, Michael Faye, and Gordon McCord. 2004. "Ending Africa's Poverty Trap." *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity* 2004(1):117–216.

- Shoko, Amon, Samwel Limbu, Hieromin Lamtane, Mary Kische-Machumu, Baraka Sekadende, Eusebia E. Ulotu, and Yunus D. Mgaya. 2019. "The role of fish-poultry integration on fish growth performance, yields and economic benefits among smallholder farmers in Sub-Saharan Africa, Tanzania." *African Journal of Aquatic Science* 44(1):15–24.
- Sklair, Leslie. 2009. "The Emancipatory Potential of Generic Globalization." *Globalizations* 6(4):525–539.
- Soini, Eija. 2005. "Changing livelihoods on the slopes of Mt. Kilimanjaro, Tanzania: Challenges and opportunities in the Chagga homegarden system." *Agroforestry Systems* 64(2):157–167.
- Soobaroyen, Teerooven, Mathew Tsamenyi, and Haresh Sapra. 2017. "Accounting and governance in Africa – contributions and opportunities for further research." *Journal of Accounting in Emerging Economies* 7(4):422–427.
- Sprague, Jeb. 2009. "Transnational Capitalist Class in the Global Financial Crisis: A Discussion with Leslie Sklair." *Globalizations* 6(4):499–507.
- TendersInfo. 2008. "India: Indian company to invest US\$500 million in Kenya." TendersInfo News. August 23. Retrieved September 28, 2019. (<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A183575668/STND?u=griffith&sid=STND&xid=e709ee5e>).
- The Economist. 2018. "A worn-out trade deal: Rwanda refuses to remove tariffs on imports of used clothing." *The Economist*. (<https://www.economist.com/finance-and-economics/2018/05/31/rwanda-refuses-to-remove-tariffs-on-imports-of-used-clothing>).
- Van Mead, Nick. 2018. "China in Africa: win-win development, or a new colonialism." *The Guardian*. July 31. (<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2018/jul/31/china-in-africa-win-win-development-or-a-new-colonialism>).
- Wamukonya, Njeri. 2007. "Solar home system electrification as a viable technology option for Africa's development." *Energy Policy* 35(1):6–14.
- Wang, Jianwei and Jing Zou. 2014. "China goes to Africa: A strategic move?" *Journal of Contemporary China* 23(90):1113–1132.
- Wodon, Quentin and Hassan Zaman. 2009/2010. "Higher food prices in Sub-Saharan Africa: Poverty impact and policy responses." *The World Bank Research Observer* 25(1):157–176.
- Yogo, Urbain T. and Audrey Verdier-Chouchane. 2015. "Enhancing North Africa's Infrastructure for Improved Competitiveness." *African Development Review* 27(3):274–287.
- You, Weimu, Asta Salmi, and Katri Kauppi. 2018. "Integration of African firms into global value chains: A comparison of Finnish and Chinese firms' sourcing from Africa." *Critical Perspectives on International Business* 14(2/3):252–281.
- Zhang, Kevin H. 2010. "How does globalization affect industrial competitiveness?" *Contemporary Economic Policy* 28(4):502–510.