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The globalization of African cities has grown significantly in the past two decades in response to domestic and global economic, social, cultural and political forces. In particular, the World Bank-IMF's Structural Adjustment Programs of the 1980s and 1990s played an important role in liberalizing the economies of many African countries to the benefit of domestic and global capital. As one of Africa's most global cities, Nairobi has witnessed significant development and reinforcement of its global trade, transport, communications, financial, and investment linkages since the 1980s due to greater tourist flows to Kenya and the ongoing concentration of multinational corporations, international NGOs, and UN agencies in the city. Moreover, the city's global distribution and consumption (and to some extent production) role has benefitted from (i) the increased emigration of Kenyans to richer countries and the subsequent increase in remittances, (ii) continuing regional political instability in East and Central Africa and the ensuing relocation of wealthy Somalis, Rwandese, & Congolese to the city and, (iii) the increasing role of Nairobi in aspects of the global underground economy. Nevertheless, the city's increased globalization has heightened its socioeconomic cleavages, with the local and global elite increasingly retreating to gated residential, office, commercial, and leisure spaces even as the relative deprivation of average Nairobians has increased; raising serious questions about city's, and indeed Kenya's, future social and political stability. Besides these negative consequences, the paper also explores positive aspects of Nairobi's globalization and ends with lessons for other globalizing African cities.



The Globalization of African Cities: The Case of Nairobi, Kenya



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