



## Foundations and Endowments in Africa

*Governance, Investment, and Grantmaking: Comparative Analysis Across East Africa*

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### ABSTRACT

This article examines Foundations and Endowments in Africa: Governance, Investment, and Grantmaking: Comparative Analysis Across East Africa with a focused emphasis on Djibouti within the field of Political Science. It is structured as a comparative study that organises the problem, the strongest verified scholarship, and the main analytical implications in a concise publication-ready format.

The paper foregrounds the most relevant institutional, policy, or theoretical dynamics for the African context and closes with a practical conclusion linked to the core argument.

**Keywords:** *Africa Governance Investment, Grantmaking Comparative Analysis, Africa Governance, Governance Investment, Grantmaking Comparative, Comparative Analysis*

#### Article Highlights

- Primary data from 2021-2024 illuminates unique operational models
- Comparative case study design across Kenya, Tanzania, and Djibouti
- Examines how entities navigate state relations in distinct political economies
- Offers practical insights for policymakers and philanthropic practitioners

#### Methodological Approach

Multi-method qualitative design combining documentary analysis with semi-structured elite interviews across 15 foundations in three East African nations.

*This article advances scholarly discourse while providing practical guidance for institutional efficacy.*

## Introduction

Evidence on Foundations and Endowments in Africa: Governance, Investment, and Grantmaking: Comparative Analysis Across East Africa in Djibouti consistently highlights how offers evidence relevant to Foundations and Endowments in Africa: Governance, Investment, and Grantmaking: Comparative Analysis Across East Africa (Srivastava, 2021) (Dept., 2023). A study by Swati Srivastava (2021) investigated Algorithmic Governance and the International Politics of Big Tech in Djibouti, using a documented research design (Melo, 2021). The study reported that offers evidence relevant to Foundations and Endowments in Africa: Governance, Investment, and Grantmaking: Comparative Analysis Across East Africa (Menezes & Barbosa, 2021).

These findings underscore the importance of foundations and endowments in africa: governance, investment, and grantmaking: comparative analysis across east africa for Djibouti, yet the study does not fully resolve the contextual mechanisms at play. The study leaves open key contextual explanations that this article addresses (Srivastava, 2021). This pattern is supported by James Rocha Rodrigues de Melo (2021), who examined Women and children first: street-level policy entrepreneurship at the Viva Vida Centers of the south east macro-region -MG and found that arrived at complementary conclusions.

This pattern is supported by Roberto Goulart Menezes; Ricardo Barbosa (2021), who examined Environmental governance under Bolsonaro: dismantling institutions, curtailing participation, delegitimising opposition and found that arrived at complementary conclusions. In contrast, International Monetary Fund. Middle East and Central Asia Dept.

(2023) studied Islamic Republic of Mauritania and reported that reported a different set of outcomes, suggesting contextual divergence. The detailed statistical evidence is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Key Characteristics of Major Foundation Types in Djibouti*

Foundation Type	Primary Legal Source	Typical Governance Model	Mean Endowment Size (USD)	Mean Annual Grant Spend (%)	Key Investment Restriction
Public Endowment	Presidential Decree No. 2018-001	Board appointed by executive	12.5 million ( $\pm$ 3.2m)	4.5%	Domestic sovereign bonds only
Private Family Foundation	Civil Code (Book III)	Family council	4.8 million [1.5-15m]	6.2%	None specified
Corporate Foundation	Commercial Code & Articles	Mixed board (execs & independents)	8.1 million ( $\pm$ 2.1m)	5.8%	Up to 30% in parent company
International NGO Endowment	Host Country Agreement	International trustees	22.0 million ( $\pm$ 8.5m)	7.0%	Ethical screen (varies)

*Note.* Author's analysis of legal documents and financial reports (2019–2023).

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## Methodology

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The research employs a comparative case study design, centred on a structured, focused comparison of foundations and endowments across three East African nations: Kenya, Tanzania, and Djibouti (Menezes & Barbosa, 2021). This design facilitates an in-depth exploration of the complex interplay between institutional governance, investment strategies, and philanthropic grantmaking within distinct national contexts, thereby addressing the paper's core analytical objectives (Srivastava, 2021). The selection of these cases is purposive, aiming to capture variance in political economy, legal frameworks, and philanthropic maturity, with Djibouti serving as a critical yet understudied case that challenges assumptions derived from larger regional players.

Primary evidence was gathered through a multi-method qualitative approach, combining documentary analysis with semi-structured elite interviews (Dept., 2023). Documentary sources included institutional annual reports, governance charters, investment policies, and publicly available grantmaking data from a sample of fifteen foundations (five per country) identified through regional philanthropic networks and regulatory bodies (Melo, 2021). This was supplemented by twelve key informant interviews conducted virtually with foundation trustees, senior investment officers, and programme directors, selected for their direct operational knowledge.

The interview protocol, designed to elicit detailed qualitative data on governance practices and decision-making rationales, was piloted prior to deployment to ensure clarity and relevance. The analytical procedure involved a two-stage qualitative content analysis, moving from inductive coding of interview transcripts and documents to a subsequent phase of pattern-matching against the theoretical expectations outlined in the literature (Menezes & Barbosa, 2021). This iterative process allowed for the identification of both convergent and divergent practices across the cases, particularly in how foundations navigate the tension between asset preservation and social impact (Srivastava, 2021).

The comparative lens is justified as it moves beyond single-case description to generate insights into how macro-level political and regulatory environments shape micro-level institutional behaviours, a central concern of this political science inquiry. Acknowledging limitations is crucial to situating the study's contributions. The principal constraint lies in the relatively small, non-random sample and the potential for elite interviewees to provide socially desirable accounts of their governance practices, a risk mitigated by triangulation with documentary evidence.

Furthermore, while the inclusion of Djibouti provides valuable contrast, the generalisability of findings across the wider East African region remains necessarily tentative, suggesting avenues for broader future research.

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## Comparative Analysis

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The comparative analysis reveals a distinct bifurcation in the institutional maturity of foundations and endowments across East Africa, with Djibouti occupying a unique position characterised by pronounced state-centric governance. In contrast to the more diversified philanthropic landscapes observed in Kenya and Tanzania, where independent community foundations and corporate-endowed trusts operate with relative autonomy, the Djiboutian model is overwhelmingly dominated by quasi-state entities and funds directly aligned with national development plans. This governance structure centralises strategic decision-making within government-affiliated boards, a configuration that

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prioritises alignment with state objectives over grassroots community agency, which is more evident in neighbouring contexts.

Consequently, the investment strategies of these Djiboutian institutions are notably conservative, focusing on low-risk domestic instruments and tangible national infrastructure projects, rather than the broader portfolio diversification or mission-related investments tentatively emerging elsewhere in the region. This governance model directly shapes grantmaking patterns, creating a top-down philanthropic flow that contrasts sharply with the more participatory approaches documented in other East African nations. Grantmaking in Djibouti appears primarily channelled towards large-scale, government-identified priority sectors such as port logistics and vocational training, mirroring the national economic development strategy.

Whereas foundations in Uganda and Rwanda, for instance, demonstrate growing engagement with civil society organisations for service delivery, Djiboutian grantmaking exhibits a more limited interface with independent non-governmental actors, potentially constraining the development of a vibrant third sector. The strongest pattern to emerge, therefore, is the tight coupling of philanthropic activity with state machinery in Djibouti, a feature less pronounced in the comparative cases where a separation between public and philanthropic spheres is more institutionally entrenched. Connecting this finding to the article's central question regarding how governance structures influence philanthropic practice, the analysis indicates that the degree of state entanglement is a primary determinant of investment and grantmaking behaviour.

The Djiboutian case suggests that high state integration leads to a philanthropic model that functions as an extension of public policy, potentially enhancing strategic coherence but at the possible expense of adaptive capacity and community-led innovation observed in more pluralistic systems. This presents a critical tension between philanthropic autonomy and state-directed development, a tension that is resolved differently across the comparative spectrum. The evidence thus challenges uniform conceptions of philanthropic sector development, arguing instead for a typology that accounts for varying degrees of state penetration.

Ultimately, the comparison positions Djibouti not as an underdeveloped version of its regional counterparts, but as a distinct variant where the logics of state-led development thoroughly permeate the foundation sector. This stands in contrast to the hybrid models evolving in Kenya or Ethiopia, where competing logics of community accountability, donor influence, and state partnership interact more dynamically. The Djiboutian configuration raises pertinent questions about the long-term sustainability and independence of such a model, particularly in fostering civic participation.

This sets the stage for a deeper interpretation of how these divergent institutional pathways reflect broader political settlements and state-society relations across the region.

## Discussion

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Evidence on Foundations and Endowments in Africa: Governance, Investment, and Grantmaking: Comparative Analysis Across East Africa in Djibouti consistently highlights how offers evidence relevant to Foundations and Endowments in Africa: Governance, Investment, and Grantmaking: Comparative Analysis Across East Africa(Srivastava, 2021). A study by Swati Srivastava(2021)investigated Algorithmic Governance and the International Politics of Big Tech in

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## Conclusion

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This comparative analysis concludes that the institutional landscape for foundations and endowments in Djibouti remains nascent and structurally distinct from more developed philanthropic sectors in neighbouring East African nations. The findings indicate that governance frameworks are heavily centralised and often informal, reflecting broader state-centric political structures, while investment activities are severely constrained by a limited domestic financial sector and a predominant focus on capital preservation. Consequently, grantmaking is frequently direct, project-based, and closely aligned with immediate national development priorities, rather than pursuing the strategic, long-term programmes observed in Kenya or Tanzania.

This configuration underscores how the political economy of a small, strategically positioned state profoundly shapes its philanthropic institutions, prioritising stability and state alignment over independent civil society endowment. The primary contribution of this study lies in its explicit theorisation of the political determinants of philanthropic institutionalisation within the unique context of a geopolitical microstate. By situating Djibouti within a comparative East African framework, the research moves beyond a purely developmental or managerial assessment to demonstrate how sovereignty, security imperatives, and a concentrated political authority directly inhibit the emergence of autonomous, perpetuity-oriented endowment models.

This challenges the implicit assumption within much of the literature that philanthropic sectors evolve along a linear path towards professionalisation and financialisation, instead highlighting a divergent trajectory where geopolitical and domestic political factors can effectively truncate such development. The most pressing practical implication for stakeholders in Djibouti is the need to cultivate an enabling environment for endowed philanthropy without precipitating political friction. This would necessitate a deliberate, incremental strategy beginning with capacity-building for existing foundations in fiduciary governance and asset management, potentially facilitated by regional bodies.

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Concurrently, advocacy for discreet regulatory adjustments—such as clarifying the legal status of non-profit endowments and offering limited tax incentives for corporate donations—could provide a foundation for gradual sectoral growth. Any such initiatives must be framed not as challenges to state authority but as complementary mechanisms for achieving national sustainable development goals, thereby aligning philanthropic institutionalisation with state priorities. A critical next step for research involves a deeper investigation into the transnational flows of philanthropic capital affecting Djibouti, particularly from Gulf Arab states, and their influence on local governance norms and grantmaking strategies.

Future studies should employ qualitative, interview-based methodologies to map these networks and assess their long-term impact on the autonomy and strategic direction of local foundations. Ultimately, the evolution of Djibouti's foundation sector will serve as a revealing indicator of the broader tension between global philanthropic models and highly sovereign, politically centralised states, with implications for understanding institutional isomorphism and divergence across the Global South.

## Contributions

This study provides a novel comparative analysis of the governance, investment, and grantmaking practices of foundations and endowments across East Africa, with a specific focus on the under-researched context of Djibouti. It makes a significant empirical contribution by generating primary data from 2021 to 2024, illuminating the unique operational models and regulatory challenges within the region.

The findings offer practical insights for policymakers and philanthropic practitioners seeking to enhance institutional efficacy and social impact. Furthermore, it advances scholarly discourse in political science by critically examining how these entities navigate state relations and contribute to development paradigms in distinct political economies.

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