

The Political Economy of Resource Extraction in Central Africa: A Kenyan Policy Analysis, 2012

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| Abstract

The governance of natural resource extraction in Central Africa presents a significant policy challenge, with consequences for economic development, environmental sustainability, and regional stability. As a regional hub, Kenya has formulated policies to engage with this sector, but the political economy factors influencing these policies and their effectiveness require examination. This analysis critically examines Kenya's strategic policy framework regarding Central African resource extraction. It identifies the principal domestic and international political economy drivers behind Kenya's policy positions and assesses their coherence with stated national and regional development goals. The study uses a qualitative case study approach. It is based on a review of official Kenyan policy documents, legislative texts, and strategic frameworks. This is supplemented by a thematic analysis of secondary literature and expert commentary to contextualise the policies within wider political economy debates. Kenya's policy approach is predominantly characterised by a state-led, infrastructural development model designed to position the country as a commercial and logistical gateway. The prioritisation of national economic interests frequently supersedes explicit commitments to regional transparency or environmental standards. Consequently, the policy framework appears more reactive to commercial opportunities than guided by a cohesive regional development strategy. Kenya's policies

towards Central African resource extraction are shaped more by immediate political and commercial calculations than by a long-term, principled regional vision. This creates a tension between Kenya's stated role as a regional leader and its pursuit of narrower national advantage. Kenyan policymakers should revise the strategic framework to integrate stronger governance and sustainability conditionalities. Fostering genuine multilateral partnerships within the East African Community is essential. Furthermore, establishing an independent oversight mechanism for Kenyan corporations operating in Central Africa's extractive sectors is advised. Political economy, resource extraction, Central Africa, Kenya, policy analysis, governance. This analysis provides a critical examination of the political economy underpinning Kenya's strategic engagement with Central African resource extraction, offering evidence to inform policy reform towards more coherent and sustainable regional outcomes.
