TRANSNATIONAL KENYAN COMMUNITY:

THE DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL
OF THE BRAIN GAIN PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

For Kenya, the excitement and apparent opportunity that accompanied the election of opposition presidential candidate Mwai Kibaki, in 2002, sparked renewed interest in a concerted effort to involve overseas Kenyans in national development. Analyzing the perspectives of various international organizations, scholars, and NGOs in the contemporary social, political and economic climate, this thesis finds that the three primary proposals of the literature on brain gain will not lead to sustained broad-based development. Broadly, these perspectives, which rely on transnational ties among highly skilled migrants to their home country, propose three mechanisms to foster brain gain and promote development: (1) remittances and other migrant financial flows; (2) virtual networks of intellectuals and professionals; (3) temporary/periodic return migration. However, this thesis considers (1) the limitations of remittances to produce widespread poverty alleviation; (2) the inability of virtual networks to address health needs; and (3) the persistence of economic, political and personal insecurity that pose obstacles to successful return. While transnational ties between highly skilled Kenyans living abroad and those individuals and groups who remain in Kenya hold great potential for development, as this analysis demonstrates, there is cause for caution.

Chapter I - Setting the Theories
Introduction

Kenyan migrants traveling abroad to seek educational and professional opportunities have long played a role in the country’s economic, social and political life. However, until the late 20th century, the nature of this interaction was largely contingent upon return or permanent settlement abroad. Those who returned brought with them new knowledge, enhanced expertise and demonstrated their commitment to the national project. Most famous of these returned migrants during the colonial era, Jomo Kenyatta became a leader of the anti-colonial struggle and president of the first independent government – the veritable baba wa taifa (father of the nation). During the 1960s and 1970s, rising rates of permanent migration by highly skilled workers to the developed world sounded international alarm bells. It was widely feared that these migrants, many of whom had received subsidized education, would diminish the development capacity of the fledgling state if they remained abroad.

The 1980s and 1990s witnessed what is commonly termed a brain drain as Kenyan doctors, nurses, teachers, journalists, students, and professors fled the economic doldrums and political repression of a moribund state. The majority of these individuals and later their families sought improved economic and political security in developed countries and especially in the United States. In spite of the nature and scope of this migration, technological innovations in transportation and communication during the past few decades have radically altered migrants’ interactions with their home country. The advent of the Internet, teleconferencing, satellites, and cellular telephones has greatly improved the efficiency and affordability of contacting relatives and associates in Kenya. While still out of reach for many Kenyan migrants, expanded air-travel offerings allow some the chance to return to the country, visit family members, and conduct business affairs. In 2002, the election of opposition presidential candidate Mwai Kibaki occasioned great hope that Kenyans living abroad would even more readably and easily contribute to the development of the state, whether they returned or not.

While stemming the brain drain or out-migration of educated and skilled workers continues to play a major role in development strategies, increasingly, organizations (including UNESCO and the World Bank) and scholars
(like Ali Mazrui) have also proposed a virtual harnessing of transnational migrants’ knowledge and skills through advanced communication technologies. Thereby, a brain gain might be reaped from the migration of skilled individuals, even from those remaining abroad. Within the framework of migration theory, these proposals promote the creation of transnational community - linking and empowering skilled workers living abroad to contribute to the social and economic development of their families, communities and states.

However, this work contends that despite the opportunities transnational networks offer for development, the brain gain solutions proposed by these scholars and organizations will not lead to sustained broad-based development. These perspectives do not sufficiently account for the historical, social, political, and economic realities of Kenya but are based instead on a generalized set of conditions that may have application in other regions and states but are inappropriate to the Kenyan example. Specifically, the overemphasis on remittances to alleviate poverty and promote development; the overestimation of virtual and network based technological contributions; and the underestimation of tenuous economic and personal security for returning or visiting migrants limit the potential development success of the proposed transnational Kenyan community.

This work closely analyzes the migration of highly skilled Kenyans during the twenty year period 1982 to 2002. It is not by accident that these years form a crucial period of study as this era of exodus opens with the repressive consolidation of power by President Moi from 1982 onward, devastating effects of donor-imposed structural adjustments programs (SAPs), economic and social crisis, re-opening of multiparty political space, re-entrenchment of the Moi regime, and concludes with the election of President Kibaki. However, despite initial exuberance surrounding the 2002 election, the continued prevalence of economic, political and personal insecurity has done little to stem the tide of migration. The perspectives on brain gain discussed in Chapter III are situated and examined within this context. If these proposals are to be effective, they must not only seek to harness the advantages of improving technologies but must truly account for the contemporary and historical conditions that have propelled so many skilled Kenyans abroad.
The organization of this study provides a theoretical and contextual background in which to consider recent perspectives on brain gain that promote transnationalism as a means to achieve development. The remainder of this chapter focuses on theories of migration, paying close consideration to the predominant neoclassical economic explanations for and consequences of migration by skilled workers. A discussion of the evolution of migration systems and transnational migration theory follows. The second chapter addresses the economic, political and social conditions of Kenya during the colonial and post-colonial eras as well as the recent period of significant migration, 1982-2002. The third chapter situates the current body of literature, both academic and organizational, on the brain gain within the context of transnational community theory. While not explicitly calling for the establishment of transnational Kenyan communities, the emphasis of the brain gain perspective on the creation and nurturing of informal and formal networks to advance development places it squarely within recent theoretical work on transnationalism. From this perspective, this paper analyzes the claims and initiatives of brain gain proponents and judges their efficacy in promoting development given the current social, political and economic climate in Kenya. This discussion centers on the actual potential of remittances to alleviate poverty, the value of virtual network contributions, and the assessment of economic and personal security for returning/visiting migrants.

The final chapter offers some reflections on the brain gain perspective as it relates to the development process in Kenya and notes the need for more sustainable forms of transnational Kenyan community. The valorization of individual migrant and group-based contributions and the concomitant deemphasizing of the state’s role do not promote a robust strategy for Kenyan development. The framework of circular migration may provide a more constructive approach to development and the international migration of the highly skilled.

I. Brain Drain versus Brain Gain: Defining the Terms

The term brain drain came to prominence in the 1960s with a dramatic rise in the migration of skilled individuals to developed countries. Neoclassical economic models of migration understood the phenomenon to be a
result of wage differentials. Skilled individuals moved to markets where they could receive better compensation than in their home country. Developed states actively and openly recruited or ‘poached’ skilled labor from the developing world with a host of incentives. Commander et al. (2004: 238) offer two explanations for this ‘poaching’ on the part of developed countries: (1) “rapid skill-based technical change” and educational deficiencies necessitated the importation of skilled labor and (2) importing skilled labor from abroad expanded access to technical and market knowledge held by the migrant of their home country and region. Thus skilled migration would improve productivity.

However, policies to attract scarce skilled labor from developing countries were widely viewed as detrimental to the development, both short and long term, of migrant sending countries. Costs of migration for sending countries arose in lost output and employment as well as the additional loss of public funds spent educating emigrants. In the 1960s and 1970s much of the concern surrounded the migration of doctors, nurses and teachers. In general, developing countries remain understaffed in these professions, especially in rural areas. Possible negative impacts on development are quite evident. Welfare and productivity of the workforce suffer in the absence of quality education and proper health care. “Furthermore, the health sector has properties that require a balanced mix of skills (doctors, nurses, midwives, etc.) and technology to be effective. As such, loss of part of the skill chain may lead to substantial and adverse ripple effects.” (Commander et al. 2004: 241) While a number of policy prescriptions to counter brain drain, including taxation schemes, were bandied about, none were ultimately implemented.

Unlike much of the brain drain literature of the 1960s, a number of scholars have recently suggested that the skilled labor migration may not have a negative impact on the sending country but rather a positive one (Vidal 1998; Mountford 1997). A number of mechanisms explain this beneficial effect of skilled labor migration. Emigration of skilled individuals may alert others to the benefits of education and motivate others to obtain more education, which raises human capital and potentially increases growth. The resources of return migrants, remittances and other emigrant investment flows provide much-needed foreign exchange and capital. Emigration may contribute to more
efficient knowledge and information flows. Finally, changes in technology and communication may limit the loss of skills (Commander et al. 2004: 236). Where the net effect of brain drain is positive for a given sending country, brain gain occurs as emigration, on the whole, provides more benefit to development than harm.

**Neoclassical Models of Migration**

Economic theories of migration analyze the distribution of labor across international borders. These models rely on neoclassical principles of individual utility-maximization and employer profit-maximization. Individuals migrate because it is to their personal benefit to do so, whether through “psychic satisfaction or income” (Borjas 1989: 457). Firms hire skilled migrants because the increase in supply reduces costs i.e. wages. However, these choices are constrained by wealth and national immigration policies. The key factor in the exchange, according to Borjas, is an ‘immigration market.’

“Individuals make the migration decision by considering the values of the various alternatives, and choosing the option that best suits them given financial and legal constraints that regulate the international migration process” (Borjas 1989: 460).

Host countries “compete” through immigration regulations (whether relatively permissive or restrictive), while source countries similarly regulate emigration through visa restrictions, etc.

During the 1960s and 1970s, neoclassical economic models of migration found a negative correlation between the migration of highly skilled individuals and development (the brain drain), although often on conflicting premises. For example, Grubel and Scott (1966) modeled international migration in a perfectly competitive market and found that there is no negative welfare impact for people remaining in the sending country so long as domestic wages did not rise as a result of migration. Thus any distortion to the market - such as subsidies for education - would cause a negative welfare effect for those who did not emigrate. However, Bhagwati and Hamada (1974) determined that migration negatively impacted sending countries and proposed a tax scheme as remedy. Their model of labor markets was also established in terms of employment and wages. They found that migration by skilled labor increased wages for skilled workers remaining in the sending country, thereby, increasing demand for education and increasing costs for the sending-country government. When skilled wages rose, unskilled wages were also likely to
rise and result in increased unemployment, amplifying the negative welfare effect of skilled labor migration. Thus both models found negative effects correlated to skilled labor migration, yet made diametrically opposed policy suggestions - *laissez faire* marketization versus internationally sanctioned taxation.

A number of proposals were put forward to staunch brain drain. Bhagwati and Hamada (1974) and Bhagwati and Wilson (1989) proposed taxes on migrants to be collected by recipient-countries and repatriated to sending-countries. This would have two direct welfare effects: (1) it would create revenue for the sending country government and (2) decrease the expected benefits to migration (wages) for skilled labor and potentially improve the income of those left behind. However, no tax was ever established. The failure to adopt these policies is attributable to the difficulty of implementing such proposals including problems of measuring temporary versus permanent migration as well as student migration as well as “ambiguities with respect to the welfare consequences” (Commander *et al.* 2004: 235). Debates on these ‘ambiguities’ have shaped much of the economic debate on brain drain, which has resurfaced in the 1990s as the trend in the emigration of skilled individuals to developed countries accelerated.

*Brain Drain or Brain Gain?*

More recent literature on brain drain has come to more optimistic conclusions than the perspectives of the 1960s and 1970s. Endogenous growth models find the migration of highly skilled workers can positively effect education and thereby development. “The central proposition is that if the possibility of emigration encourages more skill creation than skill loss, sending (or home) countries might increase their stocks of skills as opportunities to move or work abroad open up” (Commander *et al.* 2004: 248). Rising levels of education are tied to increased social benefit. For example, Mountford (1997) proposes that the current productivity of labor is positively contingent upon the share of the population who had education in the previous generation, whether they reside in the country or abroad. Vidal (1998) argues that the higher the human capital level of one-generation, the following generation
benefits through a more effective human capital formation process. These endogenous growth models rely upon wages as the major explanatory factor for migration, assuming that wages (i.e. the benefit of migration) for all skill levels are higher abroad than in the home country. Secondly, uncertainty of migration is crucial. A beneficial brain drain occurs only when highly skilled migration induces others to achieve higher levels of education but leaves some skilled workers in the home country. The literature concludes that (1) the possibility to migrate raises expected welfare for anyone who pursues higher education and (2) that an increase in total private income for the educated occurs while the uneducated experience no shift in private returns (Commander et al. 2004). Therefore, gross private income rises leveraging a general societal benefit.

Yet other human capital models find a negative relationship between migration and sending country development. These studies emphasize that economic migrants, i.e. those who migrate to achieve a higher rate of return through higher wages, tend to be viewed as “more able, ambitious, aggressive, entrepreneurial, or otherwise more favorably selected than similar individuals who choose to remain in their place of origin” (Chiswick 2000: 61). Using a human capital migration model, Chiswick finds that the more highly favorably selected the immigrant is the easier his/her adjustment to the recipient country, the greater the positive impact on the recipient country and the greater the negative impact on the sending country - i.e. a brain drain effect. This selectivity is intensified: the higher the costs of migration; the greater the efficiency of highly skilled individuals in the labor market (more adept use of resources, higher proficiency in recipient country language); and the greater the wage differential for highly skilled workers in sending versus recipient countries (Chiswick 2000: 65). Thus, Chiswick’s model observes that in sending countries with low wages for skilled labor and high costs of migration, higher individual levels of education will not lead to a general positive effect on welfare but rather to the emigration of the most highly skilled and a negative impact on sending-country welfare.

Other recent economic models also refute the positive or brain gain effects of migration by the highly skilled. Schiff (2006) identities four areas in which the brain-drain-induced “brain gain” occurs. In his literature review he
finds that skilled migration for higher wages abroad can lead to: (1) increased returns on education; (2) additional investment in education (which he defines as brain gain); (3) a situation where brain gain outweighs the brain drain effect; (4) and a net brain gain that raises welfare and growth. However, Schiff (2006: 202) notes that these results are independent of any effect on the level of education, whether through remittances or the skills of return migrants. Based on his model, net brain drain is equal to zero in the long run and is negative in the earliest stages (205: Figure 6.1). Brain drain, therefore, results in a net loss for developing source countries not a brain gain. Not only does this analysis return to work like that of Bhagwati and Hamada (1974) concluding that the brain drain has negative consequences for migrant sending countries, but it similarly proposes that migrant receiving countries enact policies to mitigate the negative effects of migration. Receiving countries, according to Schiff should institute financial support and lend expertise to sending countries for education and training programs in the areas where they expect labor shortage and therefore migrant demand. In analyzing these neoclassical and human capital models of migration there is just one conclusive result: there is no consensus on the positive or negative effect of migration by highly skilled individuals. While economic theories such as these remain the dominant form for explaining migration, their utility for individual country analysis is doubtful. As Commander et al. (2004: 244) note that these models pay “no attention to the heterogeneity between sending countries” nor to any factors beyond wages and employment. Likewise, technological changes have altered communication modes, especially in business – no longer requiring the physical presence of the individual. Alternative approaches to migration outside of economic modeling provide a more specific, nuanced perspective on the causes and consequences of highly skilled migration and the manner in which a positive brain gain effect might be observed.

II. Migration Systems Theory

In the 1980s another approach to migration appeared in the form of migration systems theory, incorporating a wide range of disciplinary approaches. Systems are constituted by two or more countries or regions that exchange
migrants. Both ends of the migration flow are analyzed as well as the linkages between the two. The movement of
people is generally viewed to take place as a result of “prior links between sending and receiving countries based on
colonization, political influence, trade, investment or cultural ties” (Castles and Miller 2003: 26). Examples include
the contemporary migration of Mexicans to the USA as a result of 19th century border expansion and the bracero
temporary-worker) programs of the early 20th century (Portes and Rumbaut 1996). Likewise, US military
occupation of the Dominican Republic and involvement in conflicts in Korea and El Salvador precipitated the
migration of Dominicans, Koreans and Salvadorans to the United States (Castles and Miller 2003; Sassen 1999).

The significance of migration systems should be situated with in the larger body of work on dependency
theory and underdevelopment (Frank 1972; Rodney 1974). Sassen (1999) argues that the history of economic
development confirms that regions with significant emigration experience economic stagnation, while already high-
growth migrant receiving regions accumulate further advantages. While Sassen does not claim a direct causal link
between migration and negative or positive economic accumulation, she notes that
"the evidence shows that individual households and localities may have benefited, but national
economies did not. History suggests that the accumulation of advantage evident in receiving countries
has tended to elude labor-sending areas because the latter, subject to uneven development, either
cannot catch up with, or are structurally excluded from, the spatialization of growth" (Sassen 1999: 12).

Thus the highly skilled migration is highly imbricated within larger systems of historical hegemonies, merely
confirming already existing patterns of economic and political dominance by developed countries.

However, the framework of migration systems theory attempts to broadly link the causes and consequences
of migration to interacting macro- and micro- level structures as well as intermediate mechanisms termed meso-
structures. Macro-structures include the political economy of the world market, the role of international relations in
facilitating movements and migration controls established by sending and receiving states. Migration systems theory
takes seriously the “evolution of production, distribution and exchange within an increasingly integrated world
economy over the last five hundred years” (Castles and Miller 2003: 27). Informal social networks that facilitate the
migration of family members, the dissemination of information and ‘cultural capital’ to perspective migrants as well
as the extension of social and economic assistance to new migrants are all forms of micro-structures. These forms of social capital exchanged within informal social networks bind “migrants and non-migrants together in a complex web of social roles and interpersonal relationships” (Boyd 1989: 639). Meso-structures of migration form an intermediary between the migrant and the state. A migration-industry has developed at this meso-level encompassing both individuals and organizations genuinely interested in assisting migrants as well as smugglers and other exploitative intermediaries.

III. Theories of Transnational Community

From this desire to describe the various macro-, meso-, and micro-structures a trend has arisen in migration studies to emphasize the new linkages that emerge between migrant groups in recipient countries and those individuals and institutions left behind in sending countries. This work has blossomed into a body of theory termed transnationalism or transnational communities. While the term transnationalism may appear to be simply a contemporary iteration of Diaspora, the defining characteristic of transnational community is rapid expansion and technological intensification under the conditions of globalization. As Castles and Miller (2003: 30) note, “transnational communities will become an increasingly important way to organize activities, relationships and identity for the growing number of people with affiliations in two or more countries.” The work of Basch et al. (1994) generated much of the early debate in the field, arguing that the appearance of floating or ‘deterritorialized’ nation-states as a result of transnational communities had potentially serious consequences for international relations. What then are the aspects of transnationalism that forebode the dissolution of nation-states while simultaneously constituting a novel approach to migrant-home country relations?

Portes (1999) provides a rather long but useful definition of transnational communities that includes activities such as:

“those that take place on a recurrent basis across national borders and that require a regular and significant commitment of time by participants. Such activities may be conducted by relatively powerful actors, such as representatives of national governments and multinational corporations, or may be initiated by more modest individuals, such as immigrants and their home country kin and
relations. These activities are not limited to economic enterprises, but include political, cultural and religious initiatives as well” (464).

However, Portes’ insistence on the sustained nature of interaction is not shared by all transnational theorists (Al-Ali and Koser 2002), as more flexible approaches find the question of longevity and resilience important issues for transnationalism to address.

Importantly the theory behind transnational community places emphasis on human agency (Castles and Miller 2003). The advent of the Internet and other improvements in transport and communication technology facilitate close contact between migrants and their home regions, including the possibility of repeated migrations. Likewise, these linkages allow for the development of virtual communities among transnational business interests as well as political and cultural communities. Here, an important distinction should be made between ‘transnationalism from above’ and ‘transnationalism from below’ (Guarnizo and Smith 1998). The former is associated with globalization which concerns itself primarily with macro-economic processes not connected to particular territories. However, transnational communities that arise from the grassroots are seen to “develop countervailing power to contest the power of corporations, governments and intergovernmental organizations. Indeed, informal linkages in the form of migration networks often undermine official migration policies which ignore the interests of migrants” (Castles and Miller 2003: 30).

While some transnational approaches imbue migrant communities with an almost revolutionary potential to confound dominant power structures through informal networks, the contributors to Transnationalism from Below adopt a more nuanced perspective avoiding this celebratory myopia. Guarnizo and Smith note that migrants among other social actors are “being invested with oppositional possibilities, despite the fact that their practices are neither self-consciously resistant nor even loosely political in character” (Guarnizo and Smith 1998: 5). Likewise the project of transnationalism as denoted by its variants ‘from above’ and ‘from below’ occurs simultaneously on separate levels, at times parallel and at times competing. Projects of global governance initiated by the international financial institutions, the United Nations, and other multilateral bodies seek to construct a global order “to regulate
transnational flows of capital, trade, people, and culture” (Guarnizo and Smith 1998: 7). These observations on transnationalism have led some to conclude that an era of weakened nationalism is on the horizon. However this conclusion is dubious.

States too have engaged in the promotion of transnational projects to reincorporate migrants in the development project of the state. As the integration of developing countries in the global economy increases dependency on foreign investment and foreign currency, links to migrants have ensured, for some states, a crucial flow of capital investment as well as remittances that sustain social order. States have adopted a number of measures to promote cooperation with migrants including: recognizing ‘honorary ambassadors’ among leading migrant business people in the hopes of increasing trade with the migrant’s receiving country; promoting ‘home-town’ associations; establishing formal communication linkages with migrant populations; allowing dual citizenship; and, in the case of El Salvador, directly assisting asylum seekers in the receiving country, the USA, by paying their legal fees (Guarnizo and Smith 1998: 8). This process of state sponsored transnationalism partly upends dependency/world systems models as the position of sending countries marginalized to the ‘periphery’ is complicated by their relationship to migrants living in the developed ‘core.’ As developing countries have attempted to officially incorporate individuals living abroad, they have, in fact, ‘deterritorialized’ the state (Schiller and Fouron 1998: 133). Individuals who migrate abroad and their descendants continue to be considered a part of the state from which they originated, whether or not they are citizens of another state or adopt new languages, customs, etc. Thus, the potential for political, technical and economic contributions by highly skilled migrants mean that states have an interest in fostering transnational ties.

Summary

While the study of transnationalism often revolves around the intra-group dynamics of migrants and their ties to the home country, this study specifically focuses on the limits of transnational ties. Recent literature on brain gain
views transnational community as fostering development with remittance capital, advanced communication and the prospect of return migration the three potential contributions of transnational migrants. Given high levels of skilled migration, especially in recent years, as well as a number of specific perspectives on brain gain, Kenya serves as an excellent case study to test the applicability of the brain gain’s claims. The following chapter provides a review of the relevant historical events and contemporary social conditions in Kenya, while the third chapter outlines the claims of recent literature on brain gain and notes the historical, social, political and economic conditions that impose limits on the effectiveness of transnational ties to promote development. Chapter II - Background

Introduction

The movement and interaction of people over long distances has long been a feature of African and particularly East African history. The diversity of peoples encompassed by the contemporary Kenyan state is a clear reminder of these migrations. While Africans of various ethnic and cultural backgrounds form the vast majority of Kenya’s population, Euro- and Asian-descendent populations - the result of earlier commercial and imperial encounters - make up a small minority. Since independence, migration has remained a significant facet of life for many Kenyans. The oil-producing countries of the Gulf draw low-skilled laborers from Kenya, while teachers have been recruited to work in neighboring African countries. Significant numbers of highly educated Kenyans have also left the country, heading for the United States, Canada and Western Europe. While migration, whether temporary or permanent, of the highly educated toward the relatively more developed West has been a feature of Kenyan history since the colonial period, the rate of this migration has rapidly accelerated since the 1980s.
The factors that influenced this massive exodus of highly skilled Kenyans must be taken into account when considering the contemporary economic, political and social milieu in which the brain gain perspective promotes the development benefits of transnational community. Of particular importance for this study are the historical occurrences of the colonial and early independence eras that influenced educational attainment, elite formation and the consolidation of centralized state authority – all themes that resonate with particular importance during the Moi era. The second section of this chapter investigates the political, economic and social factors that shaped the period of instability and insecurity under the Moi regime, precipitating a major migration of highly skilled Kenyans. Specifically, this section focuses on the twenty year span from 1982 (the year President Moi began to consolidate power after a failed coup attempt) to 2002 (when opposition candidate Mwai Kibaki won the presidency). Unlike economic theories of migration which focus on abstract models of wages and employment, this chapter establishes a contextualized background of political, economic and social factors that contributed to the migration of highly skilled Kenyans and continues to impact the state of development in Kenya and its prospects for improvement.

I. Before the Exodus: Colonial History through the Early 1980s

Kenya’s long history of regional trade carries with it a legacy of colonial encounters. The Portuguese arrived in East Africa at the end of the fifteenth century, although their “presence [in the region] was little more than nominal” (Middleton, 2004: 36). With the assistance of the Omani Arabs, the Swahili were able to drive the Portuguese out in the early eighteenth century. The Omanis had established a sultanate in Zanzibar from the 1600s that would rule the coastal region through suzerainty until the 1880s when Great Britain and Germany claimed authority over Kenya and Tanganyika, respectively. The British established an East African Protectorate in 1895 and soon after European settlers began to arrive. By 1920, the British had declared Kenya an official colony of the Empire.

European settler attempts to create a “white man’s country” were significant for the economic, social and
political organization of the colonial regime. European-descendent settlers from South Africa, Southern Rhodesia and Great Britain quickly appropriated the fertile highlands region and demanded “their full and untrammeled rights as British citizens” (Harik and Schilling, 1984: 51). However the relative small numbers of white settlers, the resistance of Asians and Africans, and the unwillingness of the Colonial Office to relinquish control to the settlers prevented the creation of the vaunted white man’s dominion in East Africa. Settler-farmers, in the image of the British gentry class, operated the appropriated farm lands by ensuring a continuous supply of poorly remunerated African laborers, while African farmers were prevented from growing lucrative cash crops like coffee and “transport and marketing mechanisms were designed for the benefit of the settler” (Harik and Schilling, 1984: 52, 71).

**Education, Elites and the Origins of Centralized Administration**

Educational policy was important to the creation of economically ‘useful’ Africans who would not threaten colonial order. Prior to the declaration of the protectorate, European missionaries, as early as 1843, had introduced evangelical curriculums emphasizing reading, writing and religion. However, as Kenya’s development orientation was linked to the prosperity of white farmers, Africans were to be a source of cheap manual labor, while a select few might aspire to low-level administrative functions such as clerks. Technical and vocational training were proposed to “uplift” and “civilize” Africans and to foster the proper characteristics of a useful and docile labor force - “discipline, punctuality, an appreciation of manual labor, respectfulness, morality, sobriety, and good character” (Harik and Schilling, 1984: 54). In fact, Kenya’s first Director of Education in 1911, James Orr, based his vocational program on the Tuskegee Institute of Booker T. Washington as a model of practical education that would not threaten the social order of white-minority dominated society (Harik and Schilling, 1984: 55).

While vocational and technical training were the explicit policy prescriptions of the colonial regime, in practice, African Kenyans desired and obtained a more academically based education. Most African subjects received little education under the colonial regime; however, settler demands for trained artisans required that a few receive technical training. However, disputes about content and lack of adequate resources contributed to the failure
of vocational education. Opposition by Africans also played a significant role in shaping an academic curriculum. In the 1930s, the Kikuyu broke away from the mission schools and established an independent education system that “stressed the teaching of English and other academic subjects” (Harik and Schilling 1984: 68). Demands for academic education were the result of higher prestige attached to white collar employment as well as the significant difference in remuneration such positions offered. Likewise, academic education provided skills necessary to act in the “political arena and strengthened African claims for greater political participation” (Harik and Schilling 1984: 70). As opposed to vocational schooling, academic schooling was part and parcel of the wider political struggle to win greater rights and ultimately independence from Great Britain. The emphasis on academic education represents the first rumbling of inchoate elite, aspiring for professional occupations and lifestyles, and persisting notions of class status linked to educational attainment.

The Kenyan colonial regime likewise faced a significant armed Kikuyu resistance that threatened to topple the colonial regime. Increasing deprivation caused by colonial “development” that disproportionately and negatively affected the Kikuyu precipitated the Mau Mau rebellion of the 1940s and 1950s. Berman identifies three major foci of discontent: (1) low wages on European settler farms and increasing rates of displacement of Kikuyu squatters; (2) overwhelming population pressures in the Kikuyu reserves that led to land shortages, soil erosion and the general decrease in agricultural productivity; and (3) in urban areas the predominantly Kikuyu labor force struggled under rapid inflation in the prices of basic goods while contending with squalid and uncertain living conditions (Berman 1976: 145). These conditions coupled with the alienation of more than 60,000 acres of land for European settlement, the imposition of ‘chiefs’ by the colonial regime and the accumulation of land and wealth by the Kikuyu elite precipitated a significant anti-colonial uprising in the Kikuyu reserves, African areas of Nairobi and vast tracts of countryside in the settled Highlands districts.

The Mau Mau revolt reflects not only the demise of the colonial regime’s administrative efforts but also underlines the interest of African elite in the centralized, authoritarian structure of the colonial regime. During and
after the insurrection, in an attempt to maintain order under the State of Emergency, Kikuyu political leaders including Jomo Kenyatta were jailed, detained and tried. Rural Kikuyu were forcibly resettled to “secure villages” and those “infected” Kikuyu, Embu and Meru were removed from the settler estates and towns to the reserves (Berman 1990: 348). However, the Kikuyu split, principally along class lines, with loyalists to the colonial regime drawn from the elite circles of the chiefs and headmen as well as from wealthy farmer and trader families. The British rewarded loyalists, including Kikuyu recruits in the Home Guard units, district Tribal Police and Tribal Police Reserves, with registered land titles to complement traditional land claims, while those suspected of supporting the Mau Mau were criminalized and punished. “The highly centralised and effective bureaucratic machine which reached the grassroots of Kenyan society through the provincial and District Commissioners, the use of detention, the banning of political activity and the selective use of reward and punishment formed the heritage of the Emergency years” (Ahluwalia 1996: 20).

The administrative policies and infrastructure of the colonial regime would exert a significant influence on the structure of an independent Kenyan state and continue to have relevance in the contemporary period. In fact, Berman notes that, “the colonial state in Kenya thus ended [at independence] neither with a bang nor a whimper, but with yet another round of modifications and additions to its existing structure” (1990: 426). First, the well developed bureaucratic and legal mechanisms of control coupled with military and paramilitary units invigorated during the Emergency period remained largely unchanged at independence. The centralization and consolidation of these power structures has continued in the expansion of power vested in the “upper levels of the bureaucracy and the major appointed executive positions from cabinet on down” (Berman 1990: 426). Secondly, unusually well-developed infrastructure and institutional support of agriculture through state-run and parastatal agencies devoted to the benefit of white settlers resulted in an economic structure oriented toward local accumulation that, for a time, made independent Kenya a veritable poster-child for capitalist development. Finally, as the Kenyan state has confronted widening tensions along class, regional and ethnic lines it has done so with the repressive methods of the colonial
regime. The tactics of the Emergency period would appear again during the post-independence era with the repression of political opponents during Kenyatta’s rule and repressive actions against political and intellectual adversaries of the Moi regime.

**An Independent Kenya with Kenyatta**

Kenya became independent on December 12, 1963, with Jomo Kenyatta, a Kikuyu and leader of the Kenya African Nation Union (KANU), as president. KANU was principally composed of the two largest ethnic groups - Kikuyu and Luo. The opposition Kenya Africa Democratic Union (KADU) was formed as a consolidation of smaller ethnic groups that feared domination by KANU. Yet within a year, KADU - led by Daniel arap Moi - had dissolved as a political entity. “Outnumbered, outmaneuvered” KADU was simply unable to compete with KANU’s majority in the legislature and had little hope of improving its electoral results (Ndegwa 1997: 608).

Kenya became a de-facto one party state (Ahluwalia 1996: 36, 37).

Not only the proverbial “father of nation,” Kenyatta represented one of a select few Kenyans who had traveled abroad to attend university during the colonial era. Many of the early exchange students who pursued higher education unavailable in Kenya later became members of the political, bureaucratic and private sector managerial elite that governed the country after independence. During the colonial period, the British greatly limited educational opportunities for Africans in order to “reproduce the racial relations of production whereby Africans were expected to be subordinate” (Mwiria 1990: 350). Educational opportunities, at times, were used to reward African collaborators with the colonial regime; in fact, the single witness to provide testimony against Kenyatta during his trial at Kapenguria during the Mau Mau rebellion in 1952/53 was allegedly offered a university scholarship in Britain (Berman 1990: 355).

Kenyatta heavily emphasized the need for an educated African population and qualified professionals to promote national development. Education also became a primary avenue for socioeconomic mobility and a guarantor of salaried employment in the public and private sectors. “Young Kenyans were sent abroad for higher education,
many of them on government-financed scholarships with guaranteed government jobs upon the completion of their studies and return to the country” (Okoth 2003: 99). Although Great Britain was the colonial metropole, the United States and the Soviet Union emerged as alternative host countries especially interested in shaping the political and ideological outlook of Kenya’s nascent elite. This migration of Kenyans acquiring higher education abroad and returning to contribute to the nation-building project characterized international migration from the colonial period through the 1980s.

**The Early Years of Moi**

Daniel arap Moi, the former KADU head, was named vice-president in 1967. His appointment to the vice-presidency balanced Kikuyu domination of KANU after most Luo defected from the party with their leader Oginga Odinga, and placated “the Kalenjin community as Kikuyu elite received fertile land in the Rift Valley” (Ndegwa 1997: 609). Odinga formed the Kenya People’s Union (KPU) in 1966 and advocated more radical policies including a move toward African socialism and nationalization of industry. In 1969, an acrimonious exchange between Kenyatta and Odinga at a rally in Kisumu provoked a violent confrontation and led to the subsequent banning of the KPU. Odinga and opposition MPs were jailed under the colonial-era Preservation of the Public Security Act, which “gave the President of Kenya wide powers and authorities to incarcerate anyone deemed a threat to the security and public order of the country, indefinitely” (Ahluwalia 1996: 59).

After the death of Kenyatta in 1978, Moi was constitutionally elevated to the post of President. While initially viewed as rather weak by the Kikuyu elite (“a passing cloud”) and beholden to the Kenyatta system he inherited, a failed 1982 coup attempt by the Kenyan air force provided Moi an opportunity to consolidate his authority. He reduced the influence of Kenyatta appointees in the cabinet and expelled individuals allegedly involved in the coup plot. In altering Kenya’s constitution to enshrine a *de jure* one-party state and appointing key political allies to the cabinet, Moi paved “the way for the political, economic, and judicial persecution of many perceived enemies of the state” (Okoth 2003: 100). He further consolidated his power in a state and economy dominated by the
Kikuyu elite by promoting the interests of Kalenjin and other ethnic minority groups especially in opportunities for higher education, bureaucratic administration and the allocation of public funds (Barkan and Chege 1989).

II. Contextualizing Migration: 1982 - 2002

This section briefly addresses the chief social, economic and political factors that precipitated the migration of highly skilled Kenyans from 1980s that continues to the present. An understanding of the recent past and the contemporary condition of Kenyan society, economy and body politic is also necessary to assess brain gain perspectives that view transnational ties as a key to development. While much has changed in Kenya since the period under discussion, significant economic and political contradictions are still to be resolved. While GDP has grown slightly in recent years, massive income inequality and inadequate distribution of resources have actually witnessed a decline in life expectancy at birth from 53.6 years in 1970-75 to just 47 years in 2000-05 (UNDP 2005: Table 10, 252). Likewise the return to multiparty democracy in 1991 and the election of opposition candidate Mwai Kibaki in 2002 that drew the Moi era to a close were marred by allegations of corruption and recent state suppression of critical voices in print and television media (BBC News, 3/2/06). An accounting of political, social and economic factors provides a framework to understand the causes of migration, the consequences for development, and a basis to analyze the brain gain’s claim that transnational activities will benefit development.

For many Kenyans, the period from President Moi’s consolidation of power in the early 1980s until the elections of 2002 was characterized by violent state repression of the opposition, high unemployment, a stagnant economy, declining standards of living and the flight of thousands of highly skilled Kenyans, including teachers, professors, nurses, and doctors. The reality of this difficult period is born out in figures from the Human Development Report that point to a steady downward trend in the living standards of Kenyans since 1990.
The Human Development Index (HDI) provides a composite measure of three basic aspects of human development:

“a long and healthy life, as measured by life expectancy at birth; knowledge, as measured by the adult literacy rate and the combined gross enrollment ratio for primary, secondary and tertiary schools; and a decent standard of living, as measured by GDP per capita in purchasing power parity (PPP) US dollars.” (UNDP 2005: 214) While economic and social factors directly account for the declines in these figures, political repression and the lack of opportunity due to corruption and governmental ineptitude certainly negatively impacted human development more broadly understood (Sen 1999). The following sections shed light on these conditions that many Kenyans fled and that continue to hamper efforts at return and retention. Special attention is given to the role of a centralized, authoritarian state in controlling political space, providing/limiting educational opportunities, ensuring/disregarding adequate healthcare, managing/bungling the economic situation and fighting/facilitating corruption, as well as the role of international institutions in political and economic decision making – all of which remain crucial issues for contemporary development strategies.

**Moi’s Long Years**

During the 1980s and 1990s the authoritarian practices of the Moi regime eroded Kenyan democracy, directly compelling opposition politicians and public intellectuals critical of the regime into exile. Despite the return to multiparty politics and putative democratic transition in the 1990s, the Moi regime ensured electoral victory through massive fraud, continued harassment of opposition figures, stifled expression critical of the government and violently attacked mass-meetings and rallies. Although foreign donor governments and international institutions suspended aid to the regime on multiple occasions, frequent reinstatement of assistance and willingness to ignore malfeasance only fueled the repressive activities of the Moi regime. Such an atmosphere of political and personal insecurity contributed to the economic and social “push” factors that fueled the migration of highly educated Kenyans.

During his twenty-four years at the helm of Kenyan politics, Moi’s attempts to consolidate power were
strongly opposed by Kenya’s intelligentsia. Universities and colleges were centers of opposition movements in favor of greater democratic space. Several underground movements such as the *MwaKenya* (the Union of Nationalists to Liberate Kenya), Kenya Patriotic Front (KPF), and the Kenya Revolutionary Movement (KRM) were targeted by the authorities. In particular *MwaKenya* was a threat to the Moi regime as it claimed a multiethnic membership not only of the urban elite, students and intellectuals but also of farmers, middle class clerks, bankers, etc. Over a thousand suspected members of *MwaKenya*, most of them students, were detained and many tortured (Amnesty International 1987: 5, 6). As political arrests continued, many university lecturers, journalists, students, and former parliamentarians went into exile.

Throughout this period, agitation on the part of Kenyan civil society organizations and international human rights groups kept the poor record of the Moi government in the spotlight and played a part in spurring the return to multiparty elections. The National Christian Council of Kenya (NCCK) and the Law Society of Kenya (LSK), respected and outspoken regime critics, issued statements critical of voter harassment and corruption in the government and bureaucracy (Ahluwalia 1996: 180). Human right monitoring groups including Africa Watch visited the country and issued reports detailing rights violations. By 1990/91, pressure from these groups coupled with negative foreign press forced the government to respond. Important political detainees were released, judges’ lifetime appointments were restored and a new Attorney General appointed (Ahluwalia 1996: 182). During the Cold War Kenya had been viewed as a bulwark against regional communism; however, the collapse of the Soviet Union meant that Moi could no longer dependably rely on a wink-and-a-nod from donor countries. With the suspension of US $350 million in aid by the World Bank and bilateral donors in 1991, the Moi government obliged to demands for the reintroduction of multiparty politics (Brown 2001: 726). On 2 December 1991, the Kenyan parliament repealed Section 2(A) of the Constitution that prohibited opposition parties (Ndegwa 1998).

Despite the euphoria surrounding the return to multipartism, constitutional reform did little to dismantle the authoritarian state structure built up over decades but rather offered legalization of political opposition to meet donor
conditions and forestall actual democratic transition. In the first multiparty elections in twenty-seven years held in 1992, KANU retained power. Although Moi’s party received only 36% of the popular vote, divisions within the opposition allowed for a government supported by only a third of the electorate. However, the elections were marred by irregularities including the Moi government’s refusal to issue permits for public meetings and forcibly breaking up opposition gatherings (US Department of State, 1996). Likewise, KANU “utilised the media and poured massive government resources into its campaign whilst denying the opposition access to any state resources” (Ahluwalia 1996: 185).

Despite the veneer of multipartism, the Moi government retained its authoritarian practices. The US State Department found that the regime continued to discriminate against Kikuyu youth in the Rift Valley, denying them national identity cards without which they could not marry, attend university, obtain employment or register to vote (U.S. Department of State 1996). A 1995 report by Human Rights Watch found that the normalization of relations with the donor community had emboldened the repressive Moi government. Despite evidence of continued repression, the donor community in 1994 pledged US $800 million in aid for the following year and Kenya’s creditors rescheduled US $700 million in debt repayment (HRW 1995). Human Rights Watch wrote that “donors appear willing to countenance harassment and intimidation of government critics as long as the government continues to liberalize the economy and retain a multiparty system in name” (HRW 1995).

In fact, the Moi regime continued to invoke laws to curtail political opposition, restrict rights to assembly, speech and expression. Among these the colonial-era Public Order Act granted district commissioners broad powers to deny licenses to public gatherings, in particular, to prevent rallies held by opposition candidates. The Preservation of Public Security Act allowed for the indefinite detention of individuals deemed “risks to public security” which was invoked to place reform and opposition figures under house arrest in 1997 (Ndegwa 1998: par 17). The same Act was used to detain without trial author Ngugi wa Thion’o, who went into self-imposed exile in 1982, for his involvement with a communal theater in his home village. The Film and Stage Plays Act, which required
government permission to stage or screen material for public viewing, was used in the 1980s to stifle criticism of the regime and in the 1990s to limit civic education seminars run by NGOs (Ndegwa 1998: par 21). Likewise, a section of the Kenyan penal code criminalized seditious publications against the government and allowed for the banning and censoring of such materials as well as stiff fines. The broad definition of sedition provided by the statute of “any utterance or publication likely to cause disaffection with the government” essentially criminalized democratic debate and curtailed the publication of articles and magazines critical of the government for fear of retribution (Ndegwa 1998: par 22).

These restrictions, among many others, on personal and political freedom as well as other repressive acts by the Moi regime were opposed by a coalition of civil society organizations that campaigned for democratic legal and constitutional reforms in the run up to the 1997 presidential elections. However, their demands for reform were sidelined by an elite-pact between opposition members of Parliament and the ruling KANU faction. Although the parliamentary agreement largely encompassed the reform demands of civil society, it once again failed to achieve the necessary constitutional changes that would result “in a substantial leveling of the political playing field. In the end, the [Inter-Parties Parliamentary Group] IPPG pact actually undermined the movement for more comprehensive reforms” (Ndegwa 1998: par 28). By 1997, it was evident that the presidential elections “would be futile as a democratic exercise” (Ndegwa 1998: par 6). As in 1992, the opposition splintered and was unable to stand behind the compromise presidential candidacy of Charity Kaluki Ngilu. KANU won a razor thin majority in the Parliament and President Moi received only 40% of the vote, although evidence of rigging and fraud were widespread (Brown 2001: 727-730).

Donors also hold a level of responsibility for the frustrated democratic transition of the 1990s. During the 1992 elections, three electoral/parliamentary boycotts emerged to protest: (1) unfair registration practices, (2) infringements on free and fair elections and (3) to denounce fraudulent election results. However, each time the opposition called for a boycott, bilateral donors and especially the United States through Ambassador Hempstone,
 pressured opposition leaders to back down (Brown 2001: 731-732). Despite evidence of pre-election irregularities and election-day manipulation as well as the Commonwealth Observer Group’s own weariness over the government’s “lack of real commitment to the process of multi-party democracy,” it and other international monitoring groups lauded the 1992 elections as a ‘successful’ step toward full-fledged democracy (Brown 2001: 732). Macroeconomic reforms and Moi’s dubious pledge to institute further change satisfied donor fears for the stability and performance of Kenya’s economy, triggering, as noted above, aid payments and debt rescheduling. In 1997, violent repression by the Moi regime against pro-democracy supporters during the Saba Saba (July 7) Day protests and other political rallies led the IMF, World Bank, bilateral donors and European Union to freeze US$ 400 million in aid pledges. However, the four largest bilateral donors - Germany, the USA, the UK and Japan - soon enthusiastically endorsed the IPPG, which made only superficial constitutional reforms, leaving untouched KANU and Moi’s fundamental advantage in control of the apparatus of the state. Likewise, in the publicly released version of the Donors’ Democratic Development Group report on the elections, direct evidence of fraud that concluded KANU had not in fact won a parliamentary majority was deleted and the information suppressed (Brown 2001: 734). Again, most donors hailed the 1997 election as an improvement over 1992 and a ‘step in the right direction.’ Aid was reinstated and the London Club of donors rescheduled US $560 million in debt arrears (Brown 2001: 734). Fear of economic instability trumped political reform and the defense of human rights.

Social and Economic Factors

The high political drama of the Moi years was both a cause and consequence of the stagnant economy and a deteriorating social order, greatly impacting social, political and economic security. While the early years of independence were characterized by high growth (on average 6.68 per cent under Kenyatta) under a conservative, orthodox capitalist economic strategy, the global economic downturn of the 1980s soon reached Kenyan shores (Azam and Daubree 1997: 19). During the 1970s and 1980s Kenya adopted an agricultural export strategy, promoted foreign and domestic investment, and sought to maintain societal order. The government also liberalized
control on currency, investment and import/export in an attempt to increase exports and control domestic demand (Lehman 1992: 6). However, the rise in oil prices in the 1980s coupled with the fall in prices commanded by agricultural commodities like coffee crippled the economy. The tourism industry suffered under mismanagement. Textile and other manufacturing industries collapsed all together. Unemployment, according to the Ministry of Labor, rose from 7.1 percent in 1982 to 16.5 percent just three years later (Godia, 1987: 361). Massive corruption and chronic mismanagement play a large part in these economic failings (Klopp and Orina 2002: 51); however, liberalized controls on capital flight, for example, also allowed between US $500 million and $650 million to flow out in 1988 alone, equivalent to between 6.7 to 8.7 percent of GDP (Lehman 1992: 8, 9). Likewise, despite, or perhaps because of, its orthodox approach to import/export, the balance of trade deficit jumped 150 percent between 1986 and 1987 (Lehman 1992: 9). In fact, Kenya has suffered a trade deficit every year from 1985 and 2004, with a trade imbalance of nearly $2.3 billion in 2004 (See Table).

Throughout the 1970s and 1980s the state and its various agencies borrowed heavily from abroad. In the early 1980s the government adjusted its borrowing and debt management policies to remain within the IMF fold. Kenyan policy, according to one IMF economist, was said to be in “total agreement with such measures as price decontrols, import liberalization, and a user charge for education and health” (Lehman 1992: 12). In 1989, Kenya entered into the first of nineteen Structural Adjustment Facilities with the IMF that released an initial US $240 million. These monies were followed up by a 20 percent cancellation of Kenya’s official bilateral debts (Lehman 1992: 12). However, as noted above, aid and debt rescheduling were suspended beginning in the 1990s as concerns over economic and political stability mounted. Again, despite its orthodox approach, or perhaps because of it, Kenya’s total external debt burden rose from US $3.39 billion in 1980 to $4.18 billion in 1985 and to a high of $7.45 billion in 1991 (See Table). In fact, between 1980 and 1998, foreign debt as a percentage of GNP “skyrocketed from 48.1 percent to a staggering 112 percent” (Mbatia and Bradshaw 2003: 74). During this period debt services payments mounted from US$ 231 million in 1980 to $520 million in 1985 and a high of $868 million
As part of structural adjustment’s control on government spending, ministry budgets were subject to heavy cut backs. Especially hard hit were expenditure on education and public health as the economic situation deteriorated throughout the 1980s. The government was unable to hire or retain enough teachers, police or doctors to keep the country’s institutions running properly. “Morale among the underpaid (and often times unpaid) civil servants and other professionals employed by the government fell drastically. Qualified graduates of the universities and secondary schools found themselves idle and frustrated, or took up menial jobs in small-scale trading and other informal sector activities” (Okoth, 2003: 100). Among those with professional positions, rising inflation wiped out savings and drastically reduced the purchasing power of salaries. In 1985, a university professor could expect to earn a minimum monthly salary of K.sh 11,500 (US $500), while in 1994, that same professor could expect to earn K.sh 16,000 (now equivalent to just US $229) - a drastic decline in real wages (Klopp and Orina 2001: 56).

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Kenya’s school system could not accommodate the demand for higher education nor could the stagnant economy absorb new highly educated graduates. While public expenditure for education rose through the early 1980s, the demand for schooling outpaced economic growth (Godia 1987: 358). Among those graduates of secondary schools, vocational training and higher learning institutions (universities, nursing schools, teacher training colleges) perhaps as few as 23 percent could expect to obtain employment. Likewise, higher education infrastructure - Kenya’s six public and seven private universities - was incapable of fulfilling student demand (Okoth, 2003: 100). This tremendous desire for academic track, higher education was partly the result of employer preference (perhaps a result of colonial era restrictions on education) “to hire individuals with formal certificates rather than those who have received relevant training in vocational institutions” (Godia, 1987: 363). The deteriorating economic situation of the country and intensified competition for employment only increased the demand for ever higher levels of educational qualification, including study at foreign universities.

To address the enormous demand for higher education and the poor economic position of the state, the Moi
government instituted reforms in cooperation with the World Bank. Under structural adjustment, student allowances ended and a user fee for university education of K.sh 6000 (US$ 100) was instituted (Klopp and Orina 2002: 55). While the World Bank and Moi regime justified these user fees as a method of cost sharing by ‘elite’ university students, the imposition of user fees, in fact, placed the heaviest burden on poor students and their families. These poorer students forced out of the university tended to serve as “natural and credible channels for expressing popular resentment” (Hagan 1994: 50 quoted in Klopp and Orina 2002: 55). In 1995, the government announced a new policy on student fees and loans under the advice of the World Bank to be administered by the Higher Education Loan Board (HELB). Students would now be expected to pay K.sh 50,000 (US $833), while needy students would be evaluated by HELB and eligible for loans up to K.sh 42,000 (US $700) (Klopp and Orina 2002: 60). The loan process under HELB required students to obtain a letter from local authorities in their home region (a secondary school headmaster, local chief, district officer or district commissioner) which allowed for “easy screening of activist students and provided a means to harass them” (Klopp and Orina 2002: 61). Similarly, during the 1980s under the powers of Chiefs’ Authority Act university students expelled for political activities were required to weekly report to their home areas and to “receive a certificate of good conduct from the chiefs before readmission to university” (Ndegwa 1998: paragraph 18).

Interestingly, Klopp and Orina conclude that rather than a passive recipient of imposed liberalization, the Moi regime actually “wielded” the policies of structural adjustment advocated by the World Bank “as a deliberate tool against politically active and oppositional students” (Klopp and Orina 2002: 64). Leaders of the Kenya University Students’ Organisation (KUSO), for example, were denied student loans. In 1997 the vice-president of the Nairobi University branch was murdered in his campus dorm room. This killing, in particular, led a number of KUSO members to accept Amnesty International’s offer to facilitate asylum requests (Klopp and Orina 2002: 62). Additionally, the crisis of funding education also highlights the issue of corruption under the Moi regime. Between 1991 and 1993, more than US $430 million in government funds was stolen through the falsification of export and
import invoices in connection with structural adjustment loans - a figure greater than the combined health and education budgets (Watkins 1995: 40). Further, in 1998 a parliamentary inquiry discovered that only 3,885,431 Kenyans pounds out of 17,522,789 approved for dispersal to Nairobi University were actually received (Klopp and Orina 2002: 65).

Structural adjustment policies, a declining economy and government mismanagement also contributed to a faltering health care system. Since 1965, medical care for all Kenyans had been free in government health facilities, a policy requiring massive outlays of state capital. Thus between independence and the mid 1990s significant gains in health were achieved. The ratio of physicians increased from 7.8 to 18 doctors per 100,000 people; numerous hospitals were constructed, raising the total from 142 to 324; the number of health centers grew from 130 to 562; infant mortality declined from 212 to 117 deaths per 1000 live births (Mbatia and Bradshaw 2003: 74). Despite the urban, elite-centered structure of health care created by the British and largely maintained by the independence government, early on Kenyatta took steps to extend health infrastructure to rural areas by building community health clinics “equipped, stocked, and managed…to benefit local communities” (Mbatia and Bradshaw 2003: 74). However during the Moi regime the community-centered development model of Harambee that had been used to cooperatively build the health clinics was politicized and plagued by corruption. Moi’s government “failed to institute an effective administrative machinery to ensure proper use of harambee monies. Some communities continued to generate the resources required to build health facilities – clinics, at least – but they could not provide themselves with other resources previously supplied by the state (e.g., medications)” (Mbatia and Bradshaw 2003: 74).

As noted above, the debt crisis of the 1980s and 1990s that precipitated structural adjustment in education also imposed painful austerity measures on health spending. During this period of financial belt-tightening, Mbatia and Bradshaw describe the predicament for government health facilities:

“Public health-care facilities have run short of medicine and other essential supplies. Most health clinics have very little medication, even basic antibiotics. The government simply cannot afford to purchase the medications (which must be imported) and relatively few Kenyans can afford to buy expensive medications on their own” (Mbatia and Bradshaw 2003: 74).
Additionally, under heavy pressure from the IMF and World Bank, Kenya imposed user fees for health care in 1989. In fact, President Moi suspended the fees for several months but, “they were reinstated under continued pressure by the external financial community” (Mbatia and Bradshaw 2003: 75). These “cost sharing” plans resulted in reduced access to quality healthcare and declining health standards especially for poor Kenyans unable to afford private medical care. (Mbatia and Bradshaw 2003: 72). Thus the economic conditions attached to international aid and loans contributed to declines in development and directly impacted migration as doctors, nurses, university lecturers and students fled the deteriorating structures of a repressive state.

Returning to the overall economic picture, Kenya’s GDP increased slightly in the 1990s; however, this growth did not trickle down into poverty alleviation or a general improvement in social conditions. In fact while GDP increased from 8.3 billion in 1990 to just 10.4 billion in 2000 (See Table), the economy’s growth rate declined by 1.2 percent annually between 1995 and 2000 (Kiringai 2001: 6). In 1999/00, Kenya witnessed a negative GDP growth rate, the lowest the country experienced in the post-independence era (Kiringai 2001: Introduction). GDP per capita also fell between 1990 and 2000 from US $370 to $340, an even further decline from its 1980 level of $420. Moreover, poverty increased from 48% of the population in 1990 to more than 56% in 2002, or some 17 million Kenyans (Barkan 2004: paragraph 6). Even more disturbing, urban poverty rose 20.3% in just three years, between 1994 and 1997 (Holmquist and Oendo 2001: 202). By 2001 and the approach of the third round of multiparty elections, a glance back on the events of the past decade were hardly what many Kenyans had hoped for with the advent of multipartism in 1991. As Holmquist and Oendo write:

“Few expected that government institutions would continue to decline throughout the decade, that the public health sector would all but collapse, that the HIV/AIDS infection rate would rise to 13 percent of the sexually active population, that ethnic tensions would escalate, or that corruption would become even more deeply rooted and pervasive. And although externally mandated economic reforms were sometimes criticized, few thought that liberalization of the economy would so closely correlate with
economic stagnation and decline, spreading poverty, growing inequality, and infrastructure decay” (Holmquist and Oendo 2001: 201).

Under these conditions, it is not difficult to imagine why so many Kenyans with the means and opportunity to migrate abroad did so.

While the donor community has recently manifested a specific concern with poverty alleviation through the Millennium Development Goals, international assistance - which has long been sporadic and, in recent years, waning - has nearly always come with strings attached. Over the past 20 years, official development assistance (ODA) has rapidly shifted given the political situation in both Kenya and the donors states. In 1980, aid stood at some US$ 638 million and by 1989 it amounted to $1.26 billion, although it vacillated from year to year. Between 1990 and 1999, ODA steadily declined from $1.23 billion to $226 million. Since 2000, ODA has begun to climb and reached $483 million in 2003 (UNDP 2005: Table 19, 282). As noted above, donor aid and debt rescheduling have often been tied to economic performance and reform. In 2000, the IMF upon returning from a three year absence in Kenya, due to unmet conditions of previous agreements, announced a US $198 million credit. The IMF seal of approval for the economy also triggered a $150 million credit from the World Bank for budget support and $500 million in foreign-donor money which allowed Kenya to reschedule its debt. However, the conditions of the IMF were reportedly the “most stringent ever imposed on an African country” (Holmquist and Oendo 2002: 202). Among the 60 conditions were a requirement that public officials and their family members declare all assets; weekly examinations of Central Bank accounts by the IMF; supervision of ministry spending to be shifted from the purview of the president to financial officers; submission of monthly records to the IMF on new borrowing and domestic budget financing; and legislation to prevent corruption and strengthen the Kenya Anti-Corruption Authority by making it more independent of government (Holmquist and Oendo 2001: 202). However, in early 2001, parliamentary failure to implement new
legislation on corruption and a High Court ruling that the Kenya Anti-Corruption Authority was unconstitutional triggered a suspension of credit by the IMF and World Bank.

As in 1994/95, the resumption of aid in 2000 triggered a resurgence in the Moi regime’s authoritarian practices. Regional assemblies and rallies of opposition politicians and dissident members of KANU were violently broken up in what had become routine political repression in the lead up to elections scheduled for December 2002. However, under the banner of the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC), Mwai Kibaki defeated Moi’s presidential designee, Uhuru Kenyatta, the son of Kenya’s first president, Jomo Kenyatta. Having served two consecutive terms, Moi was ineligible to contest the 2002 elections under the provisions of the 1991 constitution. As the election approached, Moi again engaged in a complicated ethnic calculus to assure electoral success, eventually backing Kenyatta - a move which precipitated the defection of key political allies and the formation of the winning NARC alliance. The Moi era ended without major violence; the executive changed hands between parties; and the future under a soon to be inaugurated President Kibaki was cause for celebration.

Summary

As the following chapter shows, the two decades following Moi’s consolidation of power in 1982 were attended by a significant brain drain of highly educated Kenyans fleeing politico-economic insecurity and the collapse of state infrastructure. Likewise, economic conditionality imposed by the international financial institutions in the form of austerity measures and user fees for health and education further exacerbated the situation. Yet, the emigration of Kenya’s doctors, nurses, teachers, etc., precipitated by faltering economic and social conditions, was not just a symptom but also a cause of declining human development standards. Thus the brain gain perspective on the ability of transnationalism to foster development must take into account the domestic social, economic and political factors discussed in this chapter as well as the influence wielded by the international community. Chapter III demonstrates that these conditions impose limits on the positive development effects of transnational ties – an
important consideration in assessing the brain gain perspective.

Chapter III – Kenyan Brain Gain In Focus

Introduction

The Kenyan state, at least rhetorically, has begun to exhibit a desire to tap the resources of transnational Kenyans for development promotion. In his inaugural address on 31 December 2002, President Kibaki directly appealed to Kenyans living abroad - inviting “all those who have been hounded out of our shores by repressive policies of our predecessors to come back home and join us in nation-building. Kenya needs the genius of its citizens wherever they are. It is time for healing, and we need every hand on deck” (Kibaki 2002).

However, Kenyan students, political exiles, workers and others living abroad have long contributed to the economic survival of their families and fellow Kenyans through remittances. While the exact figures are unknown, remittances sent to Kenya during the financial and political crises of the 1980s and 1990s partially compensated for the suspension of donor aid due to the recalcitrance of the Moi regime to enact economic and political reforms. Certainly then it should come as no great shock that a newly elected President Kibaki would wish to capitalize on the enthusiasm and spirited optimism of the time and invite Kenyans across the globe to join hands in building up the nation.

Among Kibaki’s many campaign pledges, the president promised to tackle corruption, reduce violent crime, create jobs and provide free primary education. Kibaki also planned to double police salaries and the number of police to 68,000 (Barkan 2003: par 26). The government followed suit on its pledge to offer free primary education,
although the need to hire new teachers outpaced expectations and in February 2003, the government added US $47 million to the budget at midyear (Ndewga 2003: 157). Further, the president pledged to create 500,000 new jobs and 100,000 new or refurbished housing units and to stimulate foreign direct investment (Carson 2003: 4, 5). The NARC controlled parliament was successful in quickly enacting the Anti-Corruption and Economic Crimes Act as well as the Public Ethics Act. In March of 2003, the chief justice was forced to retire “on allegations of corruption, twenty-three senior judges of the Court of Appeals and the High Court and 82 magistrates were suspended in October 2003” (Barkan 2003: par 25).

While Kenyans living abroad maintained ties with their family members and associates residing in the country during the Moi regime, the excitement and apparent opportunity that accompanied the election of President Kibaki sparked interest in a concerted effort to involve overseas Kenyans in national development. While the concept of national development long assumed the need for return migration to reverse the negative effects of brain drain, recent notions of brain gain have gained currency among scholars, development practitioners and migrants themselves. As discussed in the following sections, these advocates of brain gain promote a form of transnational community in which the utilization and intensification of migrant/home-country ties to transmit funds and organize networks are viewed as critical alternatives to state-led development. However, both constitutive and parallel development initiatives are highly dependent upon the activities of the state in terms of legal and physical infrastructure, as well as the larger socio-economic and political conditions fostered by the state. In this regard, the initial euphoria that accompanied the reform promise of the Kibaki election has now all but dissipated and appears to have been misplaced. While the president managed to extend free universal primary education and took initial steps to combat political malfeasance, his promises to curb crime, improve the economy and cut corruption have gone largely unfilled and appear increasingly unlikely and insincere.

Within this atmosphere of both expectation and disappointment, this case study investigates the development potential of various brain gain proposals. Having, in the previous chapters, laid out a theoretical framework in which
to view the migration of highly skilled individuals and reviewed relevant historical, social and economic background from the colonial era through 2002, the first section of this chapter outlines the dimensions of the Kenyan brain drain. The following section analyzes the perspectives and initiatives put forth by international institutions, scholars and NGOs to capture the development potential of brain drain – reversing its polarity to induce a brain gain.

Broadly, these perspectives propose three mechanisms to foster brain gain and promote development: (1) remittances and other migrant financial flows; (2) virtual networks of intellectuals and professionals; (3) temporary/periodic return migration.

However, this thesis contends that Kenya’s current economic, social and political situation limits the development potential of these proposals. The final section of this chapter discusses (1) the limitations of remittances to produce widespread poverty alleviation; (2) the inability of virtual networks to address health needs; and (3) the persistence of economic, political and personal insecurity that pose obstacles to successful return. While transnational ties between highly skilled Kenyans living abroad and those individuals and groups who remain in Kenya hold great potential for development, as this analysis demonstrates, there is cause for caution.

I. Migration Facts and Figures

To discuss brain gain one must first establish the occurrence and intensity of brain drain. While it is extremely difficult to accurately estimate the number of highly skilled Kenyans who have migrated abroad, a number of excellent studies, at a minimum, provide an indication of its scope. As these studies rely on data collected from the migrant receiving developed countries of the OECD, data for oil-producing countries in Southwest Asia and other African states - regions to which Kenyans have migrated for employment - are not included. However, when assessing the migration of highly skilled Kenyans the most crucial information comes from the OECD and especially the United States, where large numbers of Kenyan migrants have arrived and a significant portion are highly educated. For example, Ozden (2006: Figure 7.3, 234) found that in 2000, 82% of Kenyan migrants to the U.S. had
tertiary education compared to only 38% of Kenyan migrants to the 15 E.U. states. For this reason, as well as for ease of data collection, the following data focuses primarily on the attributes of Kenyans residing in the US, as a snapshot of brain drain. Whatever the sources, it is clear that migration and especially the migration of highly skilled Kenyans have grown in recent years.

The 2000 US Census reports that some 40,000 individuals born in Kenya currently reside in the US (US Census 2000). However, the Migration Information Source provides a higher estimate of 62,000 Kenyans residing in the US (Migration Information Source 2005b). These Kenyans are disproportionately highly educated. While only five percent of the Kenyan population holds a tertiary degree, for Kenyans living in the US this figure is more than ten times larger (Ozden 2006: Figure 7.4, 235). The World Development Indicators confirm that only approximately three percent of Kenyans had some level of tertiary education in 2002/2003 (World Development Indicators 2005: Table 2.11). The US Census from 2000 indicates that an overwhelming majority of Kenyans residing in the US have at least a high school education; 60.4% had an associate, bachelor, graduate or professional degree, while 21.8% had some tertiary education but had not obtained a degree (U.S. Census. 2000). A further 12% had a high school diploma or its equivalent. Only 5.9% had not finished the 12th grade. However, of these highly skilled Kenyans residing in the U.S. during the 1990s, only 52% were able to obtain employment at a level commiserate to their educational status, indicating what is often termed brain waste (Ozden 2006: Figure 7.6, 238).

These figures also translate into rapidly growing overall proportion of skilled Kenyans living abroad. A study by Carrington and Detragiache (quoted in Commander et. al. 2004: 254) on the size of brain drain found that, in 1990, approximately 9.9% of Kenyans with tertiary education had migrated abroad. Docquier and Marfouk (2006: 157, 176) find that by 2000, 38.4% of highly skilled Kenyans (defined as individuals with 13 years of schooling or more) were living abroad. Among countries with a population greater than 5 million, this was the fourth highest rate of highly skilled migration, ranking behind only Haiti, Ghana, and Mozambique (Docquier and Marfouk 2006: Table 5.4, 176). In part, this is the result of increased migration rates in general. Data from the
Department of Homeland Security shows that Kenyan immigration to the US has increased in recent years. In 1986, just 719 Kenyans were admitted; this figure grew to 1185 in 1991; 1666 in 1996; 2514 in 2001; and jumped to 5323 in 2004, the last year for which data is available (Migration Information Source 2005a). But, apart from the domestic pressures discussed in Chapter II, what accounts for the nearly quadrupled proportion of highly skilled Kenyans migrating abroad between 1990 and 2000?

One factor is US visa and immigration policies that have encouraged the migration of highly skilled individuals. The H1-B visa was implemented in the late 1980s in order to “admit professional and specialized workers for up to six years on the basis of employer’s declaration that U.S. workers are not available at the prevailing wage” (Commander et. al. 2004: 253). The Immigration Act of 1990 and the American Competitiveness and Work Force Improvement Act of 1998 have further emphasized the selection of highly skilled workers especially those with specific professional skills (Docquier and Marfouk 2006: 152,153). Since 1989, the total number of H1-B visas issued by the US government has grown substantially. In 1989, 48,820 H1-B visas were issued, 29.2% went to individuals from less developed countries; yet, within a decade, the number of visas had more than doubled to 116,695 with some 58.2% now issued to individuals from less developed countries (Commander et. al. 2004: 254). However for Kenyans, only a small percentage comes to the US on H-1B visas. Among nonimmigrant Kenyans arriving in the US on temporary work visas of varying lengths, only 587 arrived on H1-B visas out of 1,443 in 2003 (Office of Immigration Statistics 2004: Table 25, 105). In 2004, 704 Kenyans out of 1,541 total temporary workers obtained H1-B visas (Office of Immigration Statistics 2006: Table 25, 106). While these workers are not admitted as immigrants, some are able to obtain permanent residence or citizenship; others simply overstay their visas.

Overall, the high level of educational attainment among Kenyans residing in the US is not the result of the H1-B visa program or other visas granted for immigrants with particular professional skills. In fact, the majority of Kenyan migrants enter the US through the Diversity Visa (DV) Program. The DV lottery requires that an “applicant must have EITHER a high school education or its equivalent, defined as successful
completion of a 12-year course of elementary and secondary education; OR two years of work experience within the past five years in an occupation requiring at least two years of training or experience to perform” (U.S. Department of State 2006, “DV Lottery”).

Of the 3,216 Kenyans legally admitted to the US in 2003 as immigrants, 1,541 came through the Diversity Visa program while only 234 were on employment based preferences (Office of Immigration Statistics 2004: Table 8, 31). In 2004, these figures grew to 5,323 immigrants; 2,370 obtained visas through the lottery system and only 362 were granted visas on employment based preferences (Office of Immigration Statistics 2006: Table 8, 24, 28).

The other means through which highly educated Kenyans have migrated to the US has been through the tertiary education system. While Kenyans have studied in US and other foreign universities since the colonial period, only since the 1980s have significant numbers of graduates chosen to remain abroad or returned to Kenya only to migrate again to the country in which they obtained their degree. In fact, there are a large and disproportionate number of Kenyan students in the US compared to those from the rest of Africa. During the 2000/01 school year, some 6,229 Kenyan undergraduate and graduate students attended universities in the US (IIE 2002: Table 2). This figure grew by 13 percent the following year to 7,097 Kenyan students (IIE 2003: Table 1). This represents 18.2 and 18.8 percent, respectively, of the total African student population in the US during these years, despite the fact that Kenya’s 33 million inhabitants make up less than four percent of the continent’s total population. While there is no specific data on the number of Kenyan students who have overstayed their visas or converted student visas into more permanent residence, anecdotal evidence suggests that each year many choose to remain in the US with or without permission. Overall, it is estimated that of the 30,000 Kenyan students who depart each year to study abroad, only 9,000 return after completing their studies (The Nation, 12/8/05).

Finally, it is important to note that Kenya does not currently recognize dual citizenship. In the past, Kenyans who acquired citizenship in another country were requested to renounce their Kenyan citizenship by purchasing and returning a form to their local High Commission office (Mue 2000). However, the proposed draft constitution of 2004, which ultimately failed in referendum, would have established under Chapter 4, Section 20 (1) that in future “a person who is a citizen does not lose citizenship by reason only of acquiring the citizenship of another country” and
(2) “a person who as a result of acquiring the citizenship of another country ceased to be a Kenyan citizen is entitled, on application, to regain Kenyan citizenship” (Constitution of Kenya Review Commission). Until reform is enacted, Kenyans who obtain foreign citizenship to guarantee their right to work and live abroad will continue to forfeit Kenyan citizenship.

II. The Brain Gain Perspective

This section examines a number of proposals and perspectives that seek to compensate for the negative effects of the brain drain. These brain gain perspectives broadly fall under the theory of transnationalism in which migrants are seen to maintain close ties amongst themselves and with their home country, adopting an outlook that transcends the confines of permanent migration and assimilation. This approach to migration differs from a Diaspora perspective in that the dominant modes of organization between migrant and home country populations expand and intensify through technological innovation under the conditions of globalization. According to the authors and institutions reviewed in this section, these deterritorialized, or using Mazrui’s term ‘floating,’ nations of individuals, living between birth and migrant homes, hold enormous development potential (Mazrui and Kaba 2004: 1).

While these papers, projects and programs on brain gain generally acknowledge the social, economic and political instability that has plagued Africa, and more specifically Kenya, over the past decades, their shared emphasis on formal and informal networks as a solution to the brain drain crisis is, simply put, insufficient. Most of the authors and programs recognize that the immediate permanent return of migrants is unlikely given current circumstances and potentially less beneficial economically; however, they overly emphasize the development potential of remittances, technology driven communication networks as well as the ease and usefulness of temporary or periodic migrant return given the current social, economic and political insecurity. It would appear that recent perspectives on brain gain overestimate the development potential of migrants’ contributions as a result of transnational theorizing that over-valorizes the agency and efficacy of community action emanating from the
grassroots to serve as a “countervailing” force to the power of corporations, institutions and the state (Guaranzino and Smith 1998: 5). In the case of Kenya, the state remains a crucial player in determining the success and, more often than not, the failure of national development. As evidenced by President Kibaki’s inaugural address, Kenyan migrants living abroad are viewed by the state as a crucial component of development; however, the state has not effectively responded to the needs and concerns of migrants that might facilitate further investment and eventual return.

In that regard, this examination of the following studies and proposals on the potential beneficial aspects of the brain drain focuses on the authors’ conceptualizations of the transnational migrant community and its role vis-à-vis the state in the development project. Rather than focus on an intensive description of each author/institution’s perspective, this section outlines three themes that permeate the discussion of brain gain to promote development: (1) remittances; (2) intellectual and professional networks; (3) return migration. Specifically, this section investigates proposals from international organizations; three Kenyan-born academics; and two independent African-expatriate non-governmental organizations - all of whom hope to funnel the skills, energy and money of migrants into the national development project. Their perception of migrants’ ability to sidestep the state in fostering development is unrealistic given the role of a centralized and heavy-handed Kenyan state in determining the social, political and economic arena in which migrants, their money and their networks operate.

The final section of this chapter on the limits of transnationalism offers a more detailed assessment of the three areas in which these transnational community theories are lacking accurate depictions: (1) remittances as a source of poverty alleviation; (2) the limitations of technology/ internet based networks; as well as (3) the effect of personal and political insecurity on return migration.

Remittances

As the flow of international remittances has grown in recent years, both in absolute terms and in comparison to investment and aid, individuals and organizations interested in fostering brain gain have increasingly looked to
them as a source of development financing. This faith in remittances as an alternative to other sources of development capital is part and parcel of a transnational perspective that elevates the agency of migrants as development facilitators. In this section, the perspectives of professors Monica Nyamwange, Ali Mazrui and Amadu Jacky Kaba as well as the World Bank exemplify a range of disciplinary approaches to the impact and potential of remittances for development. However, all find that remittances have positive effects for development and thus serve as one of the principal means to promote brain gain. These perspectives do not exclusively address remittances and development in Kenya, but rather offer a more generalized view on brain gain. The final section of this chapter contextualizes these findings within Kenya’s contemporary social, political and economic realities.

In her study of 500 Kenyans residing in New Jersey conducted in 2000, Monica Nyamwange, a geographer at William Paterson University, examines the strong ties that remain between Kenyan migrants residing in New Jersey and their families in Kenya through informal networks allowing them to “contribute to the economic growth of their home country” (Nyamwange 2005: 97). She argues that among the Kenyan migrants she studied, the fostering of transnational ties through personal communication, remittances, and the construction of houses outweigh the negative development effects of highly skilled migration. The significance of transnational ties facilitated by modern communication is such that Nyamwange writes:

“All needed advice and information regarding the running and development of the village can be passed through the phone and executed as necessary as though the immigrant was physically present. Thus, the absence of the immigrant may not necessarily be negative as most immigrants are still in touch with their home country” (Nyamwange 2005: 100).

Frequent communication occurs with relatives and friends in Kenya, mainly through telephone, letters and e-mail, facilitated by the wide use of cellular telephones even in rural areas. Interestingly, Nyamwange notes that migrants tended to communicate more with female relatives and seemed to have greater confidence in women to invest and distribute remittances funds on behalf of the migrant (Nyamwange 2005: 99).

Remittances form an important part of migrants’ contribution to economic development. Nyamwange reports that 43.7% of the respondents remitted regularly, while 60% of those who sent money home sent less than US
$2,000 annually (Nyamwange 2005: 100). These funds went toward various activities: 72.5% of remittances receivers used some funds for consumption, 64.9% spent on school fees, 59% invested and 17.5% used remittances to pay down debt (Nyamwange 2005: 100). While non-investment, consumption activities are not often seen as development, in fact, for the majority of poor Kenyan families these activities represent not only survival but an investment in the future of their children. Given high rates of unemployment and poor remuneration compared to the US, Nyamwange argues that migrants employed in the US not only have improved professional opportunities but also “make a more reasonable contribution to economic development than someone in Kenya who earns an average salary” (Nyamwange 2005: 101). Thus international migration “should not be viewed negatively as retarding economic development through the brain drain effect” but rather as an engine of economic development through remittances (Nyamwange 2005: 102). Through anecdotal evidence, she indicates that villages with migrants abroad are more prosperous than those without, concluding that “international migration leads to economic development of the immigrants’ home country” (Nyamwange 2005: 100). Despite the rosy picture she paints, Nyamwange provides a cautionary note, questioning the longevity of transnational ties and remittances for generations of Kenyans who have known Kenya only as the birthplace of their parents or grandparents.

Along the same lines, Ali Mazrui and Amadu Jacky Kaba propose that remittances serve as a potential development benefit of brain drain. Remittances are beneficial in both the short-term and long-term. The wages sent home by migrants, Mazrui and Kaba point out, constitute a significant source of revenue for many African states. In Eritrea remittances account for 83% of exports, in Mali remittances are 20 percent of GNP, while Egypt receives an estimated $2.959 billion annually (Mazrui and Kaba 2004: 8, 9). For the continent as a whole, remittances represent the largest investment share and are said to be more than foreign aid. Finally, the temporary “safekeeping” of Africa’s intellectuals during troubled times at home represents a long term benefit of international migration, much as when Europeans fled their continent to the US during the conflagrations of the two European world wars (Mazrui and Kaba 2004: 9).
Finally, a number of recent studies published by the World Bank indicate that even those countries experiencing an out-migration of highly skilled individuals can profit from the brain drain through remittances. The globalization of transportation and communication technologies facilitate links between migrants and those left behind and make it increasingly difficult for states to regulate the movement of people and flow of capital (Ozden and Schiff 2006: ix). This transnationalism “from below” has meant that migrants send large amounts of money home in the form of unregulated, unofficial remittance payments. The Bank’s International Migration and Development Research Program, which investigates the relationship of remittances to brain drain and “development indicators including poverty and inequality, investment (in both human and physical capital), entrepreneurship, and entry into capital-intensive activities,” found that migrants’ remittances have generally positive implications for development and may off-set the negative consequences of brain drain (Ozden and Schiff 2006: 2, 3).

While the World Bank’s reports including, *International Migration, Remittances and the Brain Drain* and the 2006 *Global Economic Prospects*, provide generalized findings on remittances, they form an important component in understanding the role of remittances in development. Reportedly, world-wide remittances have doubled in the past decade, reaching $150 billion in 2004 for developing countries alone, surpassing total foreign aid and serving as the “largest source of foreign capital for dozens of countries” (Ozden and Schiff 2006: 1). Migration and remittances are generally found to:

“(a) reduce poverty of recipient households, (b) increase investment in human capital (education and health) and other productive activities, (c) reduce child labor and raise child education, and (d) increase entrepreneurship. Additional findings include the fact that (a) the impact of remittances on investment in human capital and other productive activities is greater than that from other sources of income, and (b) income gains may also accrue to households without migrants. Based on these studies migration and remittances appear to have a positive impact on the development and welfare of the sending countries” (Ozden and Schiff 2006: 14).

Additionally, while noting the numerous negative consequences of highly skilled migration (WB 2006: 58), the 2006 *Global Economic Prospects* finds a positive correlation between migration, remittances and poverty alleviation. Utilizing a model that considers GDP, income-inequality and consumption, the World Bank estimates that without remittances the poverty head count of individuals living on less than $1 daily in 1997 for Kenya would have been
two percent higher (WB 2006: Table 5A.1, 128).

There is, however, reason to be circumspect about these findings. The World Bank itself notes that its models “cannot incorporate social or political considerations” (WB 2006: 25). Likewise, models of migration and remittances incompatible to the actual conditions in Kenya render some of the Bank’s generalizations inapplicable. For example, countries like Mexico, which serves as a basis for a number of the studies, experienced large-scale, low-skilled migration with a much broader distributional effect of remittances (Ozden and Schiff 2006: 6). Moreover, that remittances increase investment in physical and “human capital (especially via increased education and health/ nutrition expenditure)” (Ozden and Schiff 2006: 8) must be balanced in the Kenyan case, for example, against shortages in healthcare personnel and declines in educational attainment for youth – two points addressed in the following section, Remittances, Poverty and Development, on the limits of transnational ties in fostering development.

Networks

The second area in which a transnational perspective clearly permeates proposals for brain gain is in the promotion of academic and professional networks to foster development. As the permanent return of migrants is unlikely, communication networks and exchanges facilitated by the internet between scientists, academics and other professionals are important means to foster development, according to a number of brain gain proponents. Among these, UNESCO and the African Leadership and Progress Network, Inc. stand out for their interest in fostering networks as a source of development, both in terms of concrete contributions and leadership. These organizations view these networks as a means to mobilize the skills of migrants in a transnational project toward the creation of alternatives to state-led development. Likewise, these networks function as a crucial component of brain gain as they harness of the skills of migrants even as they reside abroad. However, as the final section of this chapter notes, there are limits to the benefits of internet/technology-based network contributions; these linkages, for example, cannot replace needed healthcare professionals.
In its 1998 *World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-First Century: Vision and Action*, UNESCO became one of the first international organizations to actively promote the notion of brain gain.

UNESCO’s focus centers on the development of human capital and skill networks especially associated with scientific and engineering research and development projects. The organization notes that “efforts must be directed towards a process of ‘brain gain’ through collaboration programmes that, by virtue of their international dimension, enhance the building and strengthening of institutions and facilitate full use of endogenous capacities” (UNESCO 1998: Article 16). Networks of highly skilled individuals engaged in science and technology present, for UNESCO, an opportunity to make use of the ‘diaspora option’ to create brain gain. In a paper prepared by Meyer and Brown for UNESCO’s World Conference on Science, 1999, the transnational ties of expert networks engendered and organized through web-based communication are viewed as a way to positively participate in development activities.

In their study of fifteen expatriate knowledge networks, Meyer and Brown recognize the potential of intellectual/scientific networks to foster development, despite a rather mixed track record to date. They analyze and differentiate several types of migrant networks although all share an explicit goal of networking migrants amongst themselves and with their peers in their country of origin to promote skill and knowledge exchange. Likewise all the networks met certain criteria: members were mainly nationals of a particular country living abroad; members were highly skilled and active in professional fields; the network’s main purpose was economic and social development; and the network demonstrated a degree of connection among the membership and between network members and their counterparts in their country of origin (Meyer and Brown 1999: par 24). Meyers and Brown find that attempts at co-operation for development projects have not always produced tangible or easily assessable results.

Nevertheless, Meyer and Brown highlight the loss of research scientists and engineers as “these sectors are indeed considered as the new major source of wealth and development” (Meyer and Brown 1999: par 3). Thus the brain drain of experts in technological arenas represents “for the developing countries a huge potential of additional resources” whose attainability is “conceptually grounded and based on evidence” (Meyer and Brown 1999: par 8).
As return of migrants is unlikely, the “remote mobilization” of skilled migrants can foster brain gain (Meyer and Brown 1999: par 12). Networks serve as a mechanism for migrant participation in development activities, “without any physical temporary or permanent return” (Meyer and Brown 1999: par 14). With technological advances in communication “these sporadic, exceptional and limited links may now become systematic, dense and multiple” (Meyer and Brown 1999: par 14). Thus this approach does not require a “massive prior infrastructural investment” as any group “willing to make the social, political, organizational and technical effort to mobilise such a diaspora” can do so successfully (Meyer and Brown 1999: par 15).

The utility of intellectual/scientific networks is quite clearly presented in terms of a transnationalism that recognizes a facilitating role for the state. According to Meyer and Brown, networks are useful as they provide common identification and act “as communit[ies] of knowledge and interests breaking the anonymity which hampers consistent interaction” and instilling confidence in network members which is “crucial for human transactions and undertakings” (Meyer and Brown 1999: par 44). These networks, in turn, should expect support from the migrant’s state and its entities to fund scientific and technical endeavors as the ‘diaspora option’ provides for a “mutually beneficial co-operation strategy” (Meyer and Brown 1999: par 45). Yet for Kenya, this strategy to promote scientific research as beneficial to development confronts not only infrastructural and academic inadequacies but irrelevance in the face of a pressing need for doctors and nurses to address immediate health concerns.

While UNESCO acknowledges the benefits of networks of highly skilled migrants, organizations like the African Leadership and Progress Network, Inc. (ALPN) actively promote their creation. A non-governmental, non-profit organization centered in Washington, DC and Abuja, Nigeria, ALPN seeks to mobilize highly skilled Africans living abroad to form transnational linkages between themselves and those remaining in their home countries to foster development. Its primary activities include a transnational network of African professionals and academics to disseminate and share ideas on development planning. ALPN emphasizes transnational high-tech connections and transformational activities that challenge the state as alternative sources of development. In particular, it seeks to
“bring about faster private sector-driven economic growth and poverty alleviation in African countries through initiatives rooted in knowledge and information” (ALPN: “About”).

As it is unlikely that so called “Brain Drain Africans” (BDAs) will return to the continent in the near future, the “Global African Professionals/Experts/Intellectuals/Scholars Network” of the ALPN seeks to facilitate transnational activities to promote African development and the emergence of new leadership (ALPN 2006: “Addressing…”). Specifically, this web-based network operates as a discussion forum that harnesses “the intellectual capital, professional expertise, and other resources of ‘overseas Africans’ to foster technology and knowledge transfer, and thereby help to enhance human and institutional capacity in African countries” (ALPN: “Global…”). These initiatives need not require “substantial financial resources” as the effective use of technology “at modest cost can be highly effective for establishing strong global networks and pooling intellectual and technical resources, which BDAs possess in abundance” (ALPN: “Global…”). Likewise, publication of scholarly research and the sharing of knowledge and technology through virtual networks “will continue to be made easier by advancements in Internet & other modern information and communications technologies” (ALPN: “Global…”).

Successful programs, according to ALPN, foster more efficient management of critical services like education, health and basic infrastructure.

The primary motivation for this activity by skilled African expatriates, as noted by ALPN, is that “independent, nongovernmental initiatives are more desirable” in many arenas including their own “areas of expertise” (ALPN 2006: “Addressing…”). Africans living abroad are well positioned to take on such a role in their respective specialties as a result of the transnational ties they have maintained to the continent including (1) access and connections to resources and information in their countries of residence, (2) “knowledge and understanding of their home countries’ political, economic, social, and cultural environments,” (3) personal and professional ties to individuals and organizations in their native countries, as well as (4) “strong personal, patriotic, economic, emotional and psychological connections with their native societies” (ALPN 2006: “Addressing…”). Likewise, as African
leaders have proven unable or unwilling to practice good governance, those “well-off and accomplished” African professionals living abroad are to play a key role in promoting “transformational leadership” and a “competitive investment environment” to bring about “poverty alleviation through private sector-driven economic growth,” while also cutting corruption (Isimbabi 2004: “Leadership…”). However, meeting Kenya’s development needs requires substantial investment in education, health, and physical infrastructure as well as significant expansions in personnel; networks of skilled intellectuals and professionals are limited in their ability to address these needs – a point addressed in further detail in the section *Networks and Health*.

**Return Migration**

Finally, as part of the transnational mobilization of highly skilled migrants, the contributions of returning university lecturers, development planners and other professionals in combination with remittances and network-based organization are seen to outweigh the costs of brain drain. Although most authors and organizations recognize that immediate, permanent return is neither likely nor necessarily beneficial, given unemployment and poor wage remuneration, several perspectives on brain gain endorse forms of temporary, periodic return. Among them, ALPN, UNESCO and Mazrui/Kaba endorse various temporary migration schemes. In particular, Africa’s Brain Gain, Inc. (ABG) views the return of “Africa’s talent” as an integral component of a brain gain strategy. However, these perspectives on the development potential of returning migrants must be considered within the larger perspective of the political, economic and personal insecurities that continue to limit the likelihood and success of return to Kenya – a point addressed in the final section of this chapter, *Insecurity and Opportunity*.

A number of the organizations already discussed acknowledge a need for some form of temporary, periodic return migration to facilitate development. For example, the ALPN endorses programs that include education, research, and training projects in the areas of science and technology, business, medicine, law, etc. involving short or extended visits to the continent to actively collaborate with professional counterparts residing in the country (ALPN: “Global…”). Likewise, Meyer and Brown of UNESCO highlight the Transfer of Knowledge Through Expatriate
Nationals program sponsored by the UNDP to mobilize the “expertise of highly skilled expatriates by assisting them to return to their home country” for short periods of time to take part in development projects or undertake university teaching assignments (Meyer and Brown 1999: par 21). Finally, Mazrui and Kaba find that: “no less fundamental [than investment] is the rotating use of Diaspora skills to help develop Africa. There are many Africans abroad who would love to serve in Africa for a year or two every so often, at considerable loss to their overseas incomes. African government, universities and corporations need to show greater receptivity to this resource of Diaspora skills” (Mazrui and Kaba 2004: 14).

Thus, the expertise of transnational migrants even in periodic, temporary contributions is seen as a crucial component to reversing the negative effects of brain drain.

Like other organizations and authors discussed above, ABG seeks to facilitate networking opportunities for highly skilled migrants; however, the organization also seeks the physical return of African intellectuals. Like ALPN, ABG is a non-governmental, non-profit organization based in the US and Nairobi, Kenya. Among other work, ABG primarily focuses on constructing online databases for highly skilled Africans living overseas to “mobilize the skill sets of these individuals and avail the skills to the African continent” (ABG: “Mission…”). The four databases run by the organization allow individual job candidates, multinational corporations, African governments and development agencies to register and participate in an “interaction forum” that can facilitate “the return of talents to the continent” (ABG: “Mission…”). Generally, these initiatives promoted by ABG include enabling Africans living overseas to share their expertise and participate in community development, facilitating the return of those who wish to find employment (ABG: “Background…”).

While ABG seeks to encourage brain gain through the “return of talent” in its multiple incarnations, several research and conference papers conducted for the organization specifically address strategies to facilitate Kenyan brain gain through transnational activity. Donald Chapkutwo suggests the need to facilitate brain gain through transnational networking and partnership opportunities. Student and faculty exchanges with partner universities in the UK and USA as well as “high-level research activities” to be conducted in Kenya form part of the solution (Chapkutwo: 1.3(1)). Likewise, the formation of “global academic institutions” based in Africa could provide
greater links to research opportunities and facilitate dialogue with international colleagues. For example, Kenyan chemists should join and form branches of the Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (Chapkutwo: 1.3(2)). Network approaches are also important in facilitating knowledge and skill transfer for those reluctant to return to the continent. SANSA (South African Network of Skills Abroad) serves as a model for Kenya, in which South African graduates maintain ties with the universities from which they graduated particularly in the crucial fields of medicine, commerce, education and engineering (Chapkutwo: 1.3(9)). These transnational links ultimately serve in the relocation and return of Kenyan expatriates to the country. However, even Chapkutwo notes that this solution to brain drain is limited by the low salaries and inadequate facilities offered by potential employers in Kenya.

In fact, the contributions to development of temporary return migrants face numerous limitations. While periodic return of migrant university lecturers may, for example, improve the quality of university instruction, it cannot ameliorate the perennial gaps in staffing of nurses and doctors nor is it particularly likely given the state of Kenya’s universities and persisting levels of social and personal insecurity described earlier in Chapter II. The following section offers a more detailed look at the current prospects for the three areas offered by brain gain proponents (1) remittances; (2) academic/professional networks; and (3) return migration.

III. The Limits of Transnational Ties

The preceding discussion on brain gain perspectives attempted to highlight areas of congruence between both general and specific proposals to facilitate transnational community ties capable of promoting development. These perspectives and proposals on brain gain, ranging from UNESCO to Mazrui to Africa Brain Gain, Inc. adopt a transnational approach to migration, although not explicitly voiced. This perspective is evident in the recognition and promotion of networks of professional and academic migrants as well as the promotion of remittance capital as alternatives to the state-led development. However, these ‘grassroots’ transnational activities fail to account for the present conditions and development needs of the Kenyan polity. As Guarinzo and Smith (2002: 11) write, “transnational practices, while connecting collectivities located in more than one national territory, are embodied in
specific social relations established between specific people, situated in unequivocal localities, at historically
determined times.” Thus, this section scrutinizes the solutions proposed by brain gain initiatives and concretizes the
actual conditions and limitations of their implementation.

No matter how brain gain perspectives might view the state’s role, it continues to be a major player in
development. Yet despite the rhetoric of President Kibaki in his calls for “all hands on deck,” the state has done little
to actually facilitate the involvement of transnational Kenyans. As of December 2005, the government was
apparently still “developing a labour migration policy framework that would address some of the problems of brain
drain” (The Nation, 12/8/05). Likewise, despite the establishment of an informal committee composed of
government ministries and NGOs including African Brain Gain Inc. to address the issue of remittances, a permanent
committee had yet to be established and no official recommendations had been made (The Nation, 12/8/05 and CBK
2005: 1). As the Central Bank of Kenya notes, “the consultations are far from being complete” (CBK 2005: 1). It is
this slow and often inefficient process that the initiatives on brain gain seek to avoid by fostering an alternative
transnational community.

In discussing the basic premises of these proposals, this section critiques the three areas in which the
transnationalism of the brain gain perspectives lacks accurate depictions: remittances; technology-based networks;
and social, political and economic (in)security for returning migrants. On the issue of remittances, while it is clear
that remittances sustain individual families and may lead to some poverty reduction, remittance flows themselves
cannot substitute for the development responsibilities of an effective, well-governed state. Secondly, the institutional
structures to actually accommodate the scientific and academic exchanges proposed by technology-based networks
are highly limited. Likewise, while the contributions of intellectual exchange may have long-term benefits for
development planning and implementation, in the short-term such activity cannot compensate for the physical
absence of the nurses and doctors needed to address Kenya’s health crisis. Finally, the promotion of return,
temporary or permanent, advocated by some brain gain perspectives, remains highly unlikely given continued
economic, personal and political insecurity that has not been resolved with the election of Mwai Kibaki in 2002.

**Remittances, Poverty and Development**

One of the primary claims of brain gain literature is that migrant remittances may compensate for the skills lost with the out-migration of highly educated and trained individuals. In fact, data from the World Bank cited above, indicate that remittances may contribute to a decline in the number of people living in poverty. This is not surprising given the fact that remittances are directly received by migrants’ families and are often spent on consumption, education and investment activities that sustain those individuals. While there is no certain verdict on the long-run costs and benefits of remittances in terms of sustainability, consumption and investment behaviors or growth (Jones 1998: 4), it is clear that for brain gain proponents remittances serve as a potential alternative to traditional sources of international capital.

This section first examines international capital flows for Kenya to analyze the specific contemporary significance of remittances as they relate to international debt repayment, foreign investment flows, official development assistance and GDP. While not rejecting the World Bank’s conclusion that remittances may reduce poverty in Kenya, this analysis problematizes the notion of poverty measured by income and of development responsibility placed in the hands of the “people.” *There is reason to be cautious when viewing remittances as simple economic compensation for brain drain.*

In recent years, various estimates of remittances have emerged from money transfer operators, the Central Bank of Kenya and transnational civil-society groups. In 2002, Mastrex Africa Ltd, a company that manages information systems that link banks to money transfer organizations, estimated that Kenya annually receives US$ 400 million in remittances (*The East African, 1/15/02*). Based on estimates from the Equity Building Society (EBS), which handles domestic and international remittance transfers, Kenya receives $90 million - $120 million in remittances each year (Kewas and Thadhani 2004: 1). Likewise, survey results released by the UK government showed that Kenyans living in the UK annually sent home some K.sh 30 billion (*The East African Standard,*
Central Bank of Kenya statistics show remittances to be K.sh 50 billion (US $700 million) (The Nation, 4/2/05). Finally, a survey commissioned by the Kenya Club, a group of Kenyan professionals and investors residing in the UK, estimated that remittances topped K.sh 71 billion (US$ 1 billion) (The Nation, 2/14/06).

These figures indicate, despite their somewhat wide variance in results, that remittances make up a significant and growing share of financial inflows for Kenya. However, the claim that remittances “dwarf” both official development assistance and foreign direct investment is perhaps only recently valid (The East African, 2/21/06). The WB estimates that remittances to Kenya have grown from $166 million (1.6% of GDP) in 1997 to $220 million (2% of GDP) in 2001 doubling to $464 million (3.1% of GDP) in 2004 (World Bank 2006: Table 4A.1.1,104 and Table 5A.1, 128). However, figures from the Central Bank of Kenya and other surveys, as noted above, found remittance flows to be substantially larger. No matter the exact amount, remittance flows certainly outpace foreign direct investment by several times over and have in recent years equaled or exceeded official development assistance (See Table). In fact as a percentage of GDP, official development assistance (ODA) has declined from a 13.9% share of GDP in 1990 to just 3.4% in 2003 (UNDP 2005: Table 19, 282). Likewise, while foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows have hovered around 0.5% to 1% of GDP, in recent years the outward flow of investment has resulted in a negative net flow (UNCTAD 2005).

In terms of the net flow of capital, two other measures are significant: balance of trade and external debt servicing. Between 1985 and 2004, Kenya has not experienced a year in which it did not suffer a negative balance of trade. The annual trade deficit has grown from less than $500 million in 1985, to $1.4 billion in 1995, to a staggering $2.3 billion in 2004. Payment of external debt obligations makes up a smaller but still significant outflow of capital. In 1991, external debt peaked at US $7.45 billion, while debt service payments reached a high of $868 million (10.5% of GDP) in 1990. While total external debt has not declined significantly, in 2004, debt service had fallen to $356 million (2.4% of GDP). However, in terms of the effects
these figures hold for development, it is important to think outside of percentage GDP. So while, debt service has never been more than around 10% of GDP, it has consistently required a large share of the annual national budget. Debt servicing in the 1991/2 budget accounted for 21% of government expenditure; 24% in 1995/6; 17% in 1999/00; and 22% in 2005/6 (Kiringai 2001: 2 and Githethwa 2005). In fact, after wages and debt servicing are subtracted from the annual budget, little remains to finance basic infrastructure, health, education and other essential services. Over the past decade (1990 to 2000-02), constraints on the Kenyan budget, including structural adjustment budget ceilings, fiscal mismanagement and corruption have resulted in stagnant expenditure on education (7%) and health (2.2%) as a portion of GDP (UNDP 2005: Table 20, 286). Kiringai also notes that debt burden has played a large role in declining standards of living, as debt servicing payments crowd out funding for capital and social expenditure (Kiringai 2001: 1).

*These figures indicate that as remittances replace declining international inflows of capital (aid payments and net foreign investment), debt servicing and an enormous trade imbalance continue to drain capital away from Kenya.* Thus, it is accurate to view remittances as an important inflow of foreign capital; however, in the larger picture of capital flows, remittances appear less significant. Economists at the World Bank have made similar observations in terms of remittances and trade imbalance; however, they estimate that “an increase in the number of migrants equal to 3 percent of the labor force of the OECD countries would result in global welfare gains that surpass those obtained from the removal of trade barriers, with significant gains for all parties involved” (Ozden and Schiff 2006: 2). Even if this estimation holds true on the macroeconomic front and was feasible given migration restrictions, what would the further migration of doctors, nurses, teachers, look like from the ground?

Given the massive out-migration of highly skilled Kenyans in the last two decades and steady declines in the standard of living for the majority of Kenyans, to present remittances in a macroeconomic context is highly problematic. Yet, extrapolating from an equation that relies on income/consumption surveys, GDP and income
inequality, The World Bank’s *Global Economic Prospects* Report for 2006 estimates that without remittances the poverty head count of individuals living on less than $1 daily would have been two percent higher (WB 2006: Table 5A.1, 128, 129). While this may or may not be accurate, human development cannot be understood solely in economic terms of growth leading to increased GDP per capita and the like. Over the same period in which remittances have grown and supposedly reduced poverty, the Human Development Index (HDI), as noted above, has steadily declined. Furthermore, while the adult literacy rate (ages 15+) rose slightly from 70.8% in 1990 to 73.6% in 2003, the youth literacy rate (ages 15-24) declined from 89.3% to 80.3% (UNDP 2005: Table 12, 260). Other indicators of human development such as life expectancy at birth have dropped precipitously from 53.6 years in 1970-75 to a life-expectancy of just 47 years in 2000-05. As Amartya Sen notes, while higher GDP per capita may act as an important *means* to development, myriad factors constitute and are instrumental to human development including political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, and security (Sen 1999: 38).

While it may be possible that the effects of remittances lag behind or are not captured by measures like HDI, remittances do not appear to present a definitive resolution to widespread poverty and inequality in Kenya. First, it must be taken into account that, “although migration emanates from the desire to improve one’s livelihood, it is rarely the poorest who migrate. Migration involves considerable costs and risks, and besides, knowledge and social networks” (de Haas 2005: 1271). Thus while the families of migrants and perhaps even wider circles of individuals benefit from remittances, the beneficiaries are often not the poorest of the poor. Likewise, some studies have found that remittances “increase inequalities, in part because wealthy households are able to invest more of their remittances than poor households” (Jones 1998: 4). With income distribution taken into account, Kenya ranks as the fourth most inequitable country behind only Guatemala, South Africa and Brazil. The poorest twenty percent of the population receive just a 6 percent share of national income while the richest quintile capture more than 49 percent (World Bank 2005b: Table 2.7). This inequality taken with the high educational attainment levels of many migrants indicate that remittances to Kenya do not automatically benefit the poorest of the poor but those who are already more privileged.
Thus while presented as an alternative to state directed development, remittances toward development and poverty alleviation require state action in two instances. First, state regulations limit the fruitful organization of remittances for development. As the Central Bank of Kenya pointed out in response to the announcement of the Kenyan Community Abroad (KCA) – an non-governmental organization based in the US – that it would launch a Kenyans Abroad Investment Fund (KAIF): “the current legal framework does not allow CBK [the Central Bank of Kenya] to open and operate accounts for individuals or groups of individuals” (CBK 2005: 1). Secondly in regard to the development responsibilities of the state, Amartya Sen points out:

“The quality of life can be vastly raised, despite low incomes, through an adequate program of social services. The fact that education and health care are also productive in raising economic growth adds to the argument for putting major emphasis on these social arrangements in poor economies, without having to wait for “getting rich” first” (Sen 1999: 49).

With or without massive new inflows of transnational migrant capital, there is a role for the state to play, especially in the arenas of health and education which the brain gain’s emphasis on remittances does not adequately address. The overemphasis on the potential of transnational organizing ‘from below’ through academic and scientific networks provides the context for the following section to discuss the twin crises of health and education that Kenya currently faces.

**Networks and Health**

One of the primary activities promoted by UNESCO, in addition to brain gain NGOs, is the establishment of scientific/academic networks of transnational migrants. These networks are seen to provide opportunities to share information on employment as well as concretize professional and technical relationships with colleagues on the continent for research efforts. However, the institutional structures to actually accommodate the scientific and academic exchanges are highly limited. Moreover, the migration of academics has had negative consequences for the quality of instruction offered by universities that the brain gain literature does not account for. Likewise, while the contributions of intellectual exchange may have long-term benefits for development planning and implementation, in the short-term such activity cannot make up for the physical absence, for example, of medical personnel to address
Kenya’s health needs.

As Odhiambo (2005) points out the pertinent question here is whether universities and research institutions have the capacity to undertake serious research that can attract African intellectuals accustomed to working in Western facilities. Working in Europe and North America continues to enjoy advantages generally unavailable in Africa – namely the conveniences of functioning computers and email systems, university administrators who are responsible and responsive, funding opportunities for conferences and research, as well as the guarantee of medical benefits and available health care. Likewise the lack of adequate library and resource sharing consortiums restricts research and publication opportunities – the lifeblood of academia (The East African Standard, 3/21/06). To attract top researchers and students, universities need expend more resources on infrastructure, particularly on libraries which reportedly receive only 1 percent of university budgets annually (Chapkutwo, Section 1.3.5).

As a result of brain drain, the quality of education in African universities has declined. The Association of African Universities notes that there has been “a general drop in the quality of higher education in Africa” since the 1980s (Association of African Universities 2003: 1). In Kenya, the brain drain has meant a lack of highly qualified individuals to hold professorships. At the University of Nairobi, only 40 percent of the teaching force hold Ph.D. degrees, while 33 percent of the faculty at Kenyatta, 32 percent of the faculty at Moi, and only 19 percent of the faculty at Egerton have Ph.D.s (Ngome 2003: 369). Likewise, huge spikes in enrollment have occurred without commiserate faculty expansion. The Universities Academic Staff Union estimates that at Moi University the number of lectures grew from 600 to 700 in the past fifteen years, while student enrollment jumped from about 5,000 to nearly 18,000 in 2006 (The East African Standard, 3/21/06). Thus, for those who do return on a temporary or permanent basis to take up teaching positions, the responsibilities are greater than those they faced abroad while the remuneration and recognition they receive often pales in comparison to that granted “experts” from the West. In fact, Kenya’s Minister for Planning and National Development Peter Anyang’ Nyong’o estimated that African countries annually spend US $4 billion to employ about 100,000 non-African expatriates to fill positions that could
arguably be staffed by African academics and professionals living overseas (Nyong’o 2004).

While academic research and university level instruction are certainly important for long-term development, the sorts of technical and research exchanges proposed by the brain gain literature cannot address the immediate physical need for certain professionals lost in the brain drain, such as doctors and nurses. Moreover, given the need for preventative medicine and the treatment of the most common ailments including “respiratory diseases (e.g., pneumonia), diarrheal diseases, malaria, measles, and other afflictions that are no longer given much attention in the West,” emphasis on advanced medical technology and research, in fact, drains resources away from basic healthcare (Mbatia and Bradshaw 2003: 71). At bottom, critical shortages in trained medical staff have devastating consequences for public health.

While many Kenyans are trained as nurses and physicians each year, extremely high rates of migration and employment in the private sector translate into limited services for the poor, especially in rural areas. The Kenya Medical Association (KMA) estimates that only 600 doctors work in public hospitals out of more than 5,000 registered doctors in the country; the rest either work abroad or in the private sector. (Siringi 2001: 307). On average, 20 doctors leave the country to find employment abroad each month (Siringi 2001: 307), while it is estimated that in 2005, Kenya lost “2,998 nurses to other countries, with a majority of them getting jobs in the United States and United Kingdom” (The East African, 2/14/06). This medical brain drain has resulted in an average of just 13 physicians per 100,000 people, while the minimum standard set by the World Health Organization to ensure adequate care is 20 physicians per 100,000 (UNDP 2005: Table 6, 237). In order to rectify this understaffing, Kenya will have to “ignore donor restrictions and employ health workers needed urgently countrywide” (The East African Standard, 3/7/06). According to Health assistant minister Enock Kibunguchy, 7,000 nurses and 600 doctors are needed to improve health services (The East African Standard, 3/7/06); however, in 2006, medical officers in just the Coast Province and Nyanza reported nursing shortages of 2,000 and 5,200, respectively (Daily Nation, 1/19/06 and The Nation, 2/23/06).
These shortages result in especially inequitable and inadequate care for poor Kenyans. Despite staffing shortages and the imposition of user fees with structural adjustment, many Kenyans continue to frequent public health facilities which often lack proper medical equipment and medications. Others find treatment at NGO-run clinics, while the proliferation of private clinics throughout the urban and rural areas now offers care that varies greatly in cost and quality (Mbatia and Bradshaw 2003: 76). Kenyan elites, on the other hand, have long enjoyed access to expensive private clinics with expert doctors, state-of-the-art equipment and ready stocks of medications. However, for Kenyans unable to afford these services, staffing shortages and inequalities in care have tragic consequences. Health assistant minister Enock Kibunguchy estimated that for lack of medical staff, 130,000 infants born annually to HIV-positive mothers did not receive effective treatment to prevent mother-to-child transmission (The East African Standard, 3/7/06). Likewise a survey conducted in 1998 found numerous inequalities in child and maternal health based on income. Only 23.2% of births of the poorest quintile of the population were attended by skilled health personnel compared to 79.6% of births of the richest quintile (UNDP 2005: Table 8, 245). Similarly, the infant mortality rate of 95.8 per 1,000 live births and the under-five mortality rate of 136.2 per 1,000 live births for the poorest segment of the population were more than double the infant mortality rate and under-five mortality rate of the richest portion of the population, 40.2 and 60.7 respectively (UNDP 2005: Table 8, 245).

While these statistics do not demonstrate the best management of the health sector, Kenya has managed to register some important improvements in public health. For example, sustainable access to improved sanitation rose slightly from 42% of the population in 1990 to 48% in 2002; sustainable access to potable water increased from 45% of the population in 1990 to 62% in 2002; and the proportion of undernourished population declined from 44% in 1990/2 to 33% in 2000/2 (UNDP 2005: Table 7, 242). Despite these improvements, to combat HIV/AIDS and reduce maternal and infant mortality, networks of transnational Kenyan academics and scientists, no matter their commitment to development, simply cannot replace the tangible skills and physical presence of thousands of missing nurses and doctors.
Insecurity and Opportunity

Return of migrants – whether temporary, periodic or permanent – is the final issue raised in some of the literature on brain gain. While most of these perspectives recognized the difficulties and limitations on the return of migrants – some finding that remittances were more useful than the physical return of emigrants – a few authors proposed to, as ABG put it, facilitate “the return of talents to the continent.” Likewise, Mazrui and Kaba promote brain gain through the episodic return of professors to improve the quality of tertiary education. In addressing the current atmosphere of political and personal insecurity as well as the general dearth of professional and investment opportunities, it is not my intention to deny all hope to Kenyans living abroad. Nor is it my intention to denigrate the work of committed journalists, politicians, bureaucrats, civil society organizations, and individual Kenyans inside and outside the country, to improve the current situation. However, it is necessary to recognize the limitations posed to migrants’ return by - corruption and mismanagement of the state and its institutions which result in fewer, less remunerative professional positions and a less attractive business environment; political repression and government misdeeds; as well as criminal activity in urban and rural areas.

As noted earlier in this chapter, the election of Mwai Kibaki in 2002 represented a moment of celebration as Kenya inaugurated only its third president since independence. However, the initial glow of optimism has faded as President Kibaki appears to have returned to ‘politics as usual.’ While the president’s early anti-corruption moves appeared genuine, they contrast sharply to recent high profile government blunders and potential misdeeds. In February 2005, the so-called anti-corruption czar, John Githongo, resigned from his post in a move that was widely seen as sign that the officials had stymied anti-corruption efforts (Holmquist 2005: 209). The Kibaki regime, itself, has been subject to allegations of corruption, including the Anglo-Leasing deal which came to light in April 2004. Allegedly hundreds of millions in funds were siphoned off contracts for the production of new passports and a police forensics laboratory (BBC News, 1/23/06). Furthermore, in an atmosphere reminiscent of the Moi era, Kibaki’s Kikuyu brethren and allied ethnicity Embu and Meru politicians, civil servants, and advisers informally
captured special access to the president (Holmquist 2005: 210). Finally, the NARC led parliament controversially voted itself enormous pay increases, “to the point that MPs, along with cabinet ministers, now hold some of the best-remunerated positions in Kenya” (Holmquist 2005: 210). However, the most explosive charges came one year after John Githongo resigned his post and went into exile in the UK, fearing for his life. Corruptions allegations made in a dossier released by the former anti-corruption czar in February 2006 resulted in the resignation of three cabinet ministers and calls for the sacking of Vice President Moody Awori for his involvement in the Anglo-Leasing scandal (BBC News, 2/15/06).

While directly correlating incidents of corrupt behavior to poor economic performance is impossible, it is evident that corruption has negative consequences for development. Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index (CPI) “relates to perceptions of the degree of corruption as seen by business people and country analysts and ranges between 10 (highly clean) and 0 (highly corrupt)” (Transparency International). Kenya’s corruption ‘image’ has not improved in the past decade and it continues to be ranked among the most corrupt countries in the world. “Corruption undermines sound economic policies and the efficient functioning of state institutions” (ECA 2005: 17). Furthermore, the perception of corruption reduces investment, while bureaucratic red tape and malfeasance hamper and discourage commercial activity. In Kenya, it takes on average 12 procedures and 47 days to start a business, and 25 procedures and 360 days to enforce a contract (ECA 2005: Table 1, 20). With rampant corruption, a new round of aid freezes by the IMF and World Bank (The Nation, 3/15/06), and the prospect of facing a bureaucratic labyrinth, it is no wonder that migrants are reluctant to invest. However, the effects of the IMF, World Bank and other international donors extended beyond their effects on investor confidence.
While a general lack of employment opportunities for highly educated Kenyans both drives the brain drain and dissuades migrants from returning, some of this unemployment is the result of IMF/World Bank budget ceilings and other cost-cutting measures including freezes on hiring in the health and education sectors. Yet, unlike the staffing shortages in healthcare personnel, Kenya does not lack for qualified primary and secondary level teachers. In 2002, an IMF Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) ‘recommended’ that Kenya “reduce the government wage bill as a share of GDP” (IMF 2002). At the time the World Bank, IMF and other donors had suspended their relationships with Kenya. In an attempt to regain favor with the international financial institutions, the government reneged on pay increases promised in 1997 for 240,000 teachers (The Nation, 12/4/02). Teachers responded with a nationwide strike that shuttered schools for an entire month and eventually resulted in the reversal of the government’s plan in favor of the teachers’ pay hike. As of 2006, the government was once again facing strikes over teacher salaries in addition to critical shortages of teaching staff. To improve the current ratio of one instructor to 100 pupils and address the educational needs of one million children deprived of education due to lack of teachers, Francis Ng’ang’a, secretary general of the Kenya National Union of Teachers, notes that 70,000 new teacher are needed (The Nation, 3/6/06). However, some 50,000 newly graduated teachers have yet to obtain employment in public schools as the government was forced to place a hold on new hiring since 1998 (The Nation, 2/16/06). A system established in 2001 by the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) to replace teachers who had retired or died (many from HIV/AIDS) has faced numerous challenges including “inadequate capacity at all levels to manage the recruitment process” and “complaints on tribalism, nepotism, and sectionalism abound” (The Nation, 2/16/06). Thus it is not for lack of qualified teachers that Kenya’s students are suffering but rather the result of state and donor imposed restrictions as well as administrative failures.

In addition to corruption and mismanagement, the fear of violent crime also became a major concern for many urban dwellers. As of 2003, Kenya had just one police officer for every 850 people, “down from the UN standard of one per 450 that Kenya once met” (Barkan 2003: par 29). The police are poorly paid and widely regarded as the
most corrupt branch of government and many believe that the police are behind much of the increase in crime. Moreover, twenty-five percent of homes in Nairobi are broken into or burglarized every year (Holmquist and Oendo 2001: 201). This surge in violent crime as well as an increase in sexual assault is certainly attributable to growing poverty and desperation. In August 2004, after twenty-two years in exile, celebrated author, Ngugi wa Thiong’o, was robbed and beaten by four assailants who broke into the apartment he was letting in Nairobi; Mr. Ngugi was burned with cigarettes on his face and his wife, Njeeri, was sexually assaulted (The East African Standard, 8/13/04). Such a high-profile incident of violent crime certainly does little to allay the fears of other Kenyans living abroad and wishing to return.

Finally, political insecurity and repression of critical opposition voices remains an impediment to migrant return. In March 2006, masked police officers stormed the offices of the Standard and the Kenya Television network, burning thousands of copies of the Thursday edition and knocking the station off the air for several hours (BBC News, 3/2/06). The Standard group’s criticism of the president’s response to corruption allegations had earned it the ire of the government and accusations of fabricated stories. Internal Security Minister, John Michuki, claimed the raid was in the interest of state security. Later he bragged to television reporters that “‘If you rattle a snake, you must be prepared to be bitten by it’” (The East African Standard, 3/5/06). Similarly, the self-imposed exile of John Githongo - after the receipt of numerous death threats – points to a continued atmosphere of repression against the government’s political rivals. While the enforcement of constitutionally guaranteed rights has certainly improved since the Moi era, Freedom House continues to rank Kenya as ‘partly free’ as it has earned a ranking of three in both political rights and civil liberties - one representing the most free and seven the least -(Freedom House 2005). Increasing numbers of successful asylum applications to the US may also indicate an insecure political situation. Between 1997 and 2001, on average, somewhat less than 100 Kenyans were granted asylum in the US; however in 2002 that number grew to 233, the following year it was 230 and in 2004 it declined somewhat to 182 (although this figure is still double the number of Kenyans granted asylum in 2000) (Office of Immigration Statistics
Thus, despite the putative re-invigoration of democracy witnessed in the election of President Kibaki, significant concerns for economic, personal and political security continue to impede the return of migrants.

Summary

This chapter on Kenya has (1) established the scope of the brain drain; (2) described the various brain gain proposals to advance development through transnational ties; and (3) outlined some of the limitations these proposals face. The mobilization of transnational Kenyan communities, especially of the highly skilled, holds potential for development (and in fact already contributes to development through remittances as well as intellectual and physical exchanges); however, these successes are constrained by a number of factors relating to the actual conditions and needs in Kenya presently. As noted above, these factors include: net financial flows such as trade imbalance and debt repayment; lack of proper facilities for professional/academic work and the desperate need for health care personnel; as well as continuing insecurity.

Thus, the state’s role in these matters can facilitate or retard the workings of transnational community. This function has too often been ignored in recent attempts to promote a form of development by the people that avoids the state outright. While the state – its institutions, politicians and bureaucrats – have proven at times to be corrupt/captured, inept, and inefficient, the legal and physical infrastructure that remain within the purview of the state must be taken into account. This final chapter offers conclusions on the results of this study on the brain gain perspective with special attention paid to the role of the state in fostering as well as hindering development by the transnational Kenyan community.

Chapter IV – Conclusions
I. Summing Up

Does brain gain premised on the mobilization of transnational migrants hold the proverbial key to unlocking long-awaited development success? Alternatively, is the African, and more specifically the Kenyan, brain gain merely a ‘shibboleth,’ the newest jargoned platitude of an ever expanding development-speak (Odhiambo 2005)? The preceding discussion gives one reason to hope for the former but take seriously the claims of the latter. Brain gain perspectives offer useful development strategies that capitalize on the organizing potential of transnational migrants; yet, by virtue of their focus on the individual impact of migrants and migrant networks, they fail to properly account for the role of the state as both facilitator and inhibitor of development. Through commission and omission, action and recalcitrance/inability to act, the state affects the efforts of transnational migrants to facilitate development. The brain gain’s perspective on development that de-emphasizes the state and elevates the role of the migrant is best understood within theorizing on migration and development embodied in the transnational approach. As this analysis has shown, in Kenya, highly skilled transnational migrants contribute in both tangible and intangible forms to development; however, a wider view of the social, economic and political conditions of the state cautions one against adopting the mantra that remittances, networks and temporary return can lead to sustained development.

Brief reviews of the theoretical and historical processes that have led to this perspective are in order here. The history of development and highly skilled migration in Kenya can be broken down into four periods. The first era corresponds to independence as Kenyans traveled abroad to obtain university educations and returned to the country to implement modernization and put Kenya on the path to an accelerated development. The institutions of the Kenyatta government exerted a strong, centralized influence over all aspects of the state, especially in terms of
development planning – an inheritance of the colonial period.

This phase was followed by a development and migration perspective that sought to ensure the fulfillment of basic needs. Thus the migration of the highly skilled might be stanched, it was suggested, with the imposition of taxes and other restrictive measures on migration. For Kenya, this relatively prosperous period continued until the twin crises of the oil price-hikes and commodities market crash locked Kenya in a downward economic spiral of external indebtedness and widening internal poverty. The hopes of the independence era led to the realization that Kenya’s pro-capitalistic position was no bulwark against the creeping threat of permanent ‘underdevelopment.’

The economic policies of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) distinctively mark the third significant period. Beginning in the late 1980s, the SAPs sought to decrease state regulations and place more of the responsibility for development in the hands of the people and to increasingly withdraw the costs of development from the pockets of the people as well. Unemployment, faltering health and educational infrastructure, political repression and a lack of personal and professional opportunity among other factors initiated a massive migration of highly skilled Kenyans. Although all Kenyans now were expected to ‘share’ the costs of adjustment, those trained Kenyans most needed for health and education packed up their belongings and families to seek greener pastures.

Finally, the neo-liberal destabilizing, both physical and theoretical, of the state as the organizer of development through structural adjustment and market liberalization has resulted in the current perspective on development as being led by the people. The brain gain seemingly adopts this perspective on development by promoting the transnational networking of highly skilled migrants as an alternative to state-led development. However, transnationalism, as a theoretical device, recognizes and distinguishes between transnational activities ‘from above’ (the IMF, World Bank and other international bodies) and the transnational activity ‘from below’ which, for example, encompasses the various linkages among highly skilled Kenyans living or working abroad and their compatriots in Kenya. While some theorists have been critical of the exaltation granted to the ‘oppositional’ possibilities of transnational migrants, many of the perspectives on brain gain reviewed above lack this
sophistication. The failure to properly account for the role of the state as facilitator and inhibitor of development is a major lacuna in this thinking.

Brain gain perspectives and proposals on remittances, academic/professional networks, and temporary return migration have the potential to contribute to both short and long-term development. Remittances sustain poor households, alleviate some poverty and increase the capacity of individuals (Sen 1999). Much of the additional income is spent on debt repayment, housing, food, and basic health care and education all of which are instrumental to and constitutive of human development. However, it is rarely the poorest of the poor who migrate; international migration to the US and the other OECD countries is prohibitively expensive for most. Secondly, development involves long-term structural change including improvements in government, public services and other institutions. Migration of highly skilled Kenyans, however, has negatively affected the educational and health infrastructures of the state – retarding overall development in which the state continues to play a major role. As such, the attempt to re-center responsibility for resource and skill mobilization to migrants themselves does not guarantee development. While the brain gain approach recognizes the failures of the state and international community to urgently and intensively foster development, such an outlook has the potential to elide the past, present and future responsibilities of the state to alleviate suffering and promote sustained development.

The recognition that migrants and migration are increasingly transnational serves as the theoretical basis for brain gain’s perspective on the development of highly skilled migrants. In recognizing this status and applying a transnational lens, the institutions, academics and organizations promoting brain gain reject the classical notion of migration as a unidirectional, permanent relocation that results in assimilation both legal and cultural or alternatively as temporary migration for educational/occupational purposes. Increasingly, they note that migrants not only maintain strong social, business, and political ties to their home country but they move between countries, once or multiple times over a given period. These relationships and the possibility of multiple returns serve as a potential lever to development in terms of financial, human and social capital. However, as the case study above noted, for
Kenya the prospects of network-based and migrant-circulation/return models are constrained by the inadequacy of physical infrastructure and human capital, especially among universities, and the tenuous, at times violent, social and political condition of the country.

Finally, one other area of note is the role of international actors and foreign governments. Both the direct financial assistance or lack thereof and the economic (to a lesser and more recent extent, political) conditions attached to it had significant impacts on the migration of the highly skilled and the current state of social infrastructure. This is especially true in regard to budget ceilings and user fees which have negatively affected the capacity of the health and education sectors. While the era of structural adjustment has waned, economic conditionality will continue to reign so long as Kenya is massively indebted to the international financial institutions, multilateral banks and bilateral creditors. Coupled with the high cost of migration, policies of foreign governments, like those of the US, which require a minimum high-school equivalent education or greater, restrict migration to the already relatively well-off and thereby reduce the potential for international remittances to reach a broader, poorer segment of the population.

Highlighting the important role migrants play as agents of their own individual, community and national development but recognizing the inhibiting and enabling conditions of the state, foreign countries and international bodies, what solutions exist? Certainly, the Kenyan state must reform. Corruption must be rooted out at all levels of government from the police to the bureaucracy and the executive. Inefficient, ill-managed and nepotistic ministries and institutions must put their houses in order. The stifling atmosphere, threat and use of violence to silence criticism by the press and by members of government must end. Economic and personal insecurity must be reigned in. These are, however, long-term processes that will not be accomplished over night.

In the short term, the Kenyan government and other states can work to facilitate circular migration. However, circular migration is not to be mistaken for temporary, periodic stints in the country. Rather it represents a long-term, perhaps extending to permanent, return with the legal assurance that the individual can migrate again if return is not successful. On the Kenyan side, enacting the right to dual citizenship would help to ensure circular migration. As
President Kibaki noted, “Kenya needs the genius of its citizens wherever they are” (Kibaki 2002). Moreover, Kenya especially needs the monies, intellect and skills of its most highly educated who are currently residing abroad, not only in the form of remittances and networks but also as entrepreneurs, doctors, nurses and university lecturers. Promoting truly circular migration with the right to re-migrate, guaranteed by foreign states, would help to dispel some of the justified fears highly skilled Kenyans have in returning the country. Without the opportunity to re-migrate, how many skilled Kenyans will risk more remunerative positions, with greater educational and professional opportunities for themselves and their children to return to a politically, economically and socially uncertain Kenya? While migration and development are, to an extent, in the hands of migrants themselves, the state has not withered away; it can have a positive effect on jumpstarting development by better recognizing and facilitating the role of the transnational Kenya community that the brain gain perspective so enthusiastically promotes.

II. Future Research Directions

During the book launch of the World Bank’s recent *International Migration, Remittances and the Brain Drain*, a female audience member inquired as to the lack of gender disaggregated data in the report’s various studies. Speaking out of turn, a senior researcher from a migration think tank and panel discussant responded tersely: “Just wait. It’s coming.” I should hope so.

Recent scholarship (Chang 2000) suggests that increasing numbers of women, both unskilled and skilled (many of them nurses) are joining the ranks of international migrants, long seen as a primarily male phenomenon. For Kenya, given the rising although still under-represented proportion of female university students, the lack of gender disaggregated data on Kenyan students studying abroad and immigrant/nonimmigrant visas results in a male-centric bias in the study of highly skilled migration. For example, in tertiary level education the ratio of female students to male students is 0.53; despite the fact that at the primary and secondary level the ratio is 1.00 and 0.98, respectively (UNDP 2005: Table 27, 309). Thus at the university level in Kenya women hold only 33 percent of the
Gender inequity is further revealed in the lack of women serving as senior academics and administrators in Kenya’s public and private universities. In March 2006, Professor Olive Mugenda became the first female vice-chancellor at a public Kenyan university (The Nation, 3/27/06). In fact, a study on the status of women at four public and private Kenyan universities (conducted by a Kenyan woman completing her doctoral studies at the University of London) revealed that the only senior position with gender equity was that of librarian and at one university there were no female full professors (The Nation, 3/27/06).

Yet, often cited constrains to return – political and personal insecurity as well as lack of professional opportunity – rarely adopt a gender lens. Gender-based discrimination in education and the professional workforce are not cited, nor is gender-related violence. In fact, a widely known incident of gender-related violence against a visiting migrant was the sexual assault of Njeeri Ngugi, wife of Ngugi wa Thiong’o, upon the couple’s return to Kenya in 2004. However, some have inappropriately described the incident of gender violence in the honor-bound, patriarchal coding of a “humiliation” for her husband (Odhiambo 2005: 11). There is a need for disaggregated data on female migration and for greater research into the relationship, especially for highly educated women, between gender discrimination and international migration.

**Table: Kenya Economic Figures, 1980-2004**

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<th>Net ODA</th>
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Note: All figures in US$ millions, except GDP per capita which is in US$.

**Sources:**


Imports/Exports: 1985 - 2004 (UNCTAD: Table 3.1)

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Given the emphasis on intensive, technology driven interconnectedness, this ‘option’ is better termed transnational as opposed to diaspora.

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Human Development Index Trends
[1 represents the highest level of development, 0 the lowest.]

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Source: UNDP 2005: Table 2, 225

Transparency International Scores

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Source: Transparency International, various years