



The Turbulent 2010s: A Historical Draft

Paul Tiyambe Zeleza*

Abstract

The 2010s was an exceptionally turbulent decade characterised by complex and contradictory changes at local, regional and global levels. The changes encompassed all spheres from the political to the economic, as well as the social, cultural, and environmental dimensions of global society. This article identifies and analyses six key trends in the historical trajectory of the period. First, the decade was marked by intense political polarization in many countries; second, was the democratic recessions and resistance in some climes; third, was the rising economic inequalities and disequilibrium; fourth was the shift in global hierarchies and hegemonies; fifth, was the emergence of surveillance capitalism; and the final one was the rebellion of nature as evident in extreme weather conditions and global struggles over climate change. In analysing these key trends the article seeks to make sense of the messy complexities, mind boggling contradictions and massive changes of the various historical conjunctures of modernity.

Résumé

Les années 2010 ont été une décennie exceptionnellement turbulente, caractérisée par des changements complexes et contradictoires aux niveaux local, régional et mondial. Les changements ont affecté tous les domaines, du politique à l'économique, ainsi que les dimensions sociale, culturelle et environnementale de la société mondiale. Cet article identifie et analyse six tendances importantes de la trajectoire historique de cette période. Premièrement, la décennie a été marquée par une intense polarisation politique dans de nombreux pays; deuxièmement, il y eut les récessions démocratiques et la résistance en certains lieux ; troisièmement, c'était les inégalités économiques et le déséquilibre croissants; la quatrième était le changement de hiérarchies et des hégémonies mondiales; cinquièmement, il y avait l'émergence du capitalisme de surveillance; et la dernière fut la

* Vice Chancellor, United States International University – Africa, Nairobi, Kenya.
Email: pzeleza@gmail.com

rébellion de la nature, évidente dans les conditions météorologiques extrêmes et les luttes mondiales contre le changement climatique. En analysant ces tendances, l'article tente de donner un sens aux complexités désordonnées, aux contradictions troublantes et aux changements massifs des diverses conjonctures historiques de la modernité.

Introduction

Over the past several months and weeks, there has been a deluge of diagnoses of the 2010s, sometimes accompanied by prognoses for the 2020s. Such retrospectives and reflections, infinitely varied in their sagacity and silliness, are ritualised cognitive efforts by modern societies to make sense of the messy complexities, mind boggling contradictions and massive changes of the various historical conjunctures of modernity.

Periodisation is of course central to the historian's craft and the historical imagination in general. Decades, like centuries and millennia, provide convenient and concentrated packaging of otherwise bewildering events and transformations over the unwieldy flows of time. As historians know all too well, interpretations of the past are as much reconstructions of the past as they are constructions of the present, and projections of anxieties and aspirations for the future.

Thus, they are always provisional, always subject to re-interpretations by future generations imbued with their own perspectives, preoccupations, problems and possibilities. But historical reconstructions go beyond temporal dynamics; they're conditioned by historical geography, the location of scholars and commentators in specific times and spaces, as well as the epistemic demands of the enterprise of knowledge production in its multifaceted institutional, intellectual, ideological and individual contexts and intersectionalities.

This is another way of saying that my reflections of the last decade reflect my multiple locations and positionings as an African diaspora scholar based in the United States during the first six years of the 2010s, and in Kenya during the last four. For me the 2010s were a turbulent decade characterised by several major trends. Whether or not these trends will prove lasting and determine the unfolding trajectories of the twenty-first century is anyone's guess.

As a historian, crystal gazing into the future is not my professional forte. Indeed, the record of predictions by eminent people in academia, business, media and other forecasting experts such as soothsayers and intelligence agencies, is quite dismal. But the future does not will itself blithely into being; it unfolds from the past that becomes ever clearer with the passage of time.

Some of the developments and events we accord significance now may pale into irrelevance and others that are barely discernible from the noisy clutter of the present may prove more enduring and transformational. Hence, the title of the essay: it is a historical draft subject to foreseeable and unforeseen revisions. In my view, the 2010s were characterised by six key trends: first, tribalism went global; second, by democratic recessions and resistance; third, rising economic disequilibrium; fourth, shifting global hierarchies and hegemonies; fifth, emergence of surveillance capitalism; and finally, the rebellion of nature.

Tribalism Goes Global

During the 2010s the spectre of tribalism – ethno-cultural nationalisms, xenophobic racisms, religious fundamentalisms and jingoistic populisms – arose from the massive disruptions of technological and socioeconomic change, undergirded by the devastations of the once celebrated sprawl of neoliberal globalisation that suffocated liberal democracies and the promises of diversity and inclusion in many of the world's increasingly multi-cultural societies. Neoliberal globalisation met its comeuppance in the Great Recession of 2008–09 that bequeathed to the 2010s widespread economic desolation, deepening inequality, decline of the middle classes, rising sense of powerlessness and hopelessness among ordinary people, and raging popular distrust of elites and establishments.

The stock of populist demagogues grew, whereas that of traditional politicians and technocrats fell. As I wrote elsewhere, 'Increasingly perceived as corrupt and ineffective to deliver growth and overcome the roaring headwinds of entrenched poverty, unemployment, declining living standards, social instability, unsustainable indebtedness, technological disruptions, and other intractable challenges, liberal democracy retreated as the allure of the fiercely intolerant ideologies of populism, protectionism, and partisanship rose' (Zeleza 2019:163). Several surveys show that in the 2010s vast majorities around the world expressed growing distrust of elite-led public and private institutions including governments, business, media, and universities, just to mention a few.

Out of the toxic inheritance of the 2000s emerged the intoxicating and intolerant allure and illusions of identity politics, which seemed to overwhelm older political affiliations framed around the traditional ideologies of the right and the left. Long prevalent, even if always contested, conceptions and solidarities of nationhood and citizenship valorising difference and inclusion were increasingly upended by more people embracing the perilous and pernicious comforts of sameness, self-referentiality, and ethno-

cultural purity. In short, the ascriptive and often aspirational solidarities of class, community and country gave way to the dangerous essentialist and exclusionary conceits and attachments of culture, creed and colour.

Identity politics was fuelled by the politics of fear and resentment, powerlessness and panic, as well as desperate yearnings for dignity and control of their lives by growing numbers of people. The palpable anxieties and nostalgia for the rapidly vanishing and often imagined certainties of the old normal arose out of deepening social inequalities and marginalisation of masses of people who, encouraged and emboldened by nativist demagogues and ideologues, increasingly blamed their misfortunes on internal and external 'others'.

Minorities and migrants bore the brunt of this aggressive 'othering' of political and social opprobrium for the disappearing or frozen opportunities of social mobility. Seizures of moral panic about undesirable migrants and undeserving minorities, often fanned by unscrupulous politicians and bigoted zealots, gripped rich countries in the global North and sub-regional powers in the emerging economies.

Thus, political tribalism spread in mature and nascent democracies alike, from the world's largest democracy – India, under Narendra Modi's virulently Hindu nationalist government that came to power in 2014 – to the world's wealthiest democracy – the United States, under Donald Trump's unabashedly racist administration that assumed power in 2017 – to one of the world's oldest democracies – Britain, under a succession of Conservative Party prime ministers since 2010, which descended into the imperial and provincial fantasies of Brexit.

Intolerant nationalisms also engulfed many newer democracies as well, from South Africa with its periodic convulsions of xenophobic violence, to Brazil under Jair Bolsonaro's unflinchingly right-wing regime that won the 2018 elections, to the fragile democracies of Eastern Europe where unapologetically illiberal regimes gained ascendancy championed most loudly by Viktor Orbán's Fidesz, in power in Hungary since 2010.

Democratic Recessions and Resistance

Clearly, the ascendancy and spread of political tribalism was accompanied by global recessions of democracy. In the euphoria of the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, the Third Wave of Democracy that swept the former socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe, and an assortment of dictatorships in Asia, Africa and Latin America seemed unstoppable. Francis Fukuyama, an American scholar, giddily proclaimed the end of history

(Fukuyama 1992). By the 2010s democratic retreat was evident in its historic heartlands and among the newer democracies, pulverised by the resurgence of reactionary and right-wing populist forces and growing disillusionment, especially among the younger generations, with the minimalist, ineffective, and corrupt democracies prevalent in many countries.

There is currently a vast scholarly and popular literature bemoaning and diagnosing the democratic recessions of the 2010s. Democracy indexes show sharp declines in average global scores in dozens of countries. According to a report by The Economist Intelligence Unit, the scores fell for much of the 2010s: between 2016 and 2017 they fell in eighty-nine countries, stagnated in fifty-one, and didn't improve in any region (Economic Intelligence Unit, 2017). According to Freedom House's *Freedom in the World Report 2019*, 2018 'recorded the 13th consecutive year of decline in global freedom. The reversal has spanned a variety of countries in every region, from long-standing democracies like the United States to consolidated authoritarian regimes like China and Russia. The overall losses are still shallow compared with the gains of the late 20th century, but the pattern is consistent and ominous. Democracy is in retreat' (Abramowitz 2018).

The reversal of the post-Cold War democratic wave has been attributed to several factors. They include the failure of democratic regimes to meet the needs of their populations, rising anger and anxieties about growing inequalities, the corrosive effects of massive technological disruptions and the rise of digital authoritarianism, the revival of global hegemonic rivalries, the hollowing out of democratic institutions and practices especially protections for migrants and minorities, and the sheer exhaustion from the euphoria of the 1990s. A critical backdrop to the recession of democracy was the Great Recession of 2008–09 that devastated many economies and reinforced the inability of governments to deliver and safeguard economic prosperity.

But there were some bright spots. In Africa, they included the adoption of a new vibrant constitution in Kenya in 2010 that brought closure to the deadly post-election violence of 2007–08. In the hotly contested elections of 2017, Kenya distinguished itself by becoming the first African country and the fourth in the world where a presidential election was revoked by the judiciary, which underscored the independence of the judiciary, the growing strength of public institutions, and deepening national commitment to transparency, accountability, and the rule of law, thereby demonstrating that Kenyan democracy was maturing.

Several vicious dictators and notorious kleptocrats met their rendezvous with history, including President Robert Mugabe, the once celebrated hero

of the Zimbabwean liberation struggle who descended into an irascible octogenarian autocrat, and was overthrown in November 2017. Next door in South Africa, President Jacob Zuma, whose disastrous reign over the rainbow nation culminated in state capture by corrupt forces, was ousted in February 2018 by the African National Congress, the venerable liberation movement experiencing the proverbial challenges of transitioning into an effective governing party. The decade ended with the opening up of authoritarian Ethiopia under Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed who assumed office in April 2018 and proceeded to win the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize.

Similar stories of reform, sometimes fragile to be sure, can be told for other world regions. In the US, the Republican Party's stranglehold over the three branches of government achieved in the 2016 elections eased when the Democratic Party won the majority of seats in the House of Representatives in 2018 and proceeded to impeach President Trump in December 2019, thereby restoring some faith in the resilience of the American constitutional system.

Further south, in Latin America, reforms, sometimes frail, were registered from Ecuador to Mexico to Cuba, where the Castros finally exited the scene. The decade closed with the ouster of Bolivia's Evo Morales in December 2019 following protests against voting irregularities in the president's bid for a fourth term.

In the European parliamentary election of May 2019, the much anticipated and dreaded surge of far-right parties failed to materialise. Despite threats from China, massive and protracted protests erupted in Hong Kong from September to December in 2014 and resumed from June 2019, and continue at the time of writing. The first set of protests were triggered by proposed reforms to Hong Kong's electoral system, and the second by the introduction of a bill that would have allowed the extradition of criminal fugitives to China.

In India, fresh from electoral victory in the general elections earlier in the year, the emboldened government of Prime Minister Modi passed a controversial citizenship law on 11 December 2019 allowing citizenship for ostensibly persecuted immigrants from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan excluding Muslims. It was met with massive resistance across the country by protesters who saw it as a dangerous homage to Hindu nationalism, and an assault against the country's 200 million Muslims and the country's cherished secular constitution.

Clearly, history comprises messy and multifaceted flows of complex and contradictory forces that abjure singular narratives. In short, the much-bemoaned phenomenon of democratic recession was accompanied

by reinvigorated struggles for democratic expansion, whose trajectories continue to unfold.

In fact, a year into the 2010s, in 2011, the world was electrified by unprecedented struggles for democracy in North Africa. Often dubbed the Arab Spring, the uprisings and rebellions toppled the region's sclerotic and kleptocratic dictatorships in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. The firestorm spread to other parts of Africa from Mali to Côte d'Ivoire to Uganda to Malawi, as well as several Arab countries in the Middle East including Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain, Yemen and Syria. Save for Tunisia, and tepid reforms in some countries, the Arab Spring soon descended into the Arab Winter with the return of a revanchist and ruthless dictatorship in Egypt and outbreak of ferocious civil wars in Libya, Yemen and Syria.

The decade ended with reignited struggles in Sudan and Algeria that succeeded in ousting the once indomitable dictatorships of Presidents Omar al-Bashir and Abdelaziz Bouteflika, respectively. The varied outcomes of the Arab Spring are to be expected. As reflected in the vast literature that has since emerged, they can be attributed to the varied constellation of internal political, economic, social and institutional forces, and geopolitical dynamics. The Arab Spring represented the second phase in Africa's struggles for the 'second independence' that began in the 1980s and 1990s. This is a subject I reflected on at length in my 2014 book, *The Resurgence of Africa: Domestic, Global, and Diaspora Transformations* (Zeleza 2014).

Some scholars and commentators credit the Arab Spring with inspiring protests for democracy and change in some parts of Europe, Asia and the Americas. Whatever the accuracy of such claims, in many parts of the world the decade witnessed the revitalisation of old and new social movements that challenged prevailing configurations of power. In the US, three movements are worth mentioning: Occupy Wall Street, Black Lives Matter and Me Too. Elsewhere movements against authoritarianism and populism gathered momentum.

The Occupy Wall Street movement began in September 2011 in New York City. It soon spread to other American cities and cities in several countries including Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Britain, Canada, Colombia, France, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Nigeria, Spain, South Africa, South Korea and Turkey. The movement was characterised by occupations, demonstrations, strikes, picketing and social media activism. In the US the movement was galvanised under the slogan, 'We are the 99 per cent'. The protests were against deepening income and wealth inequality, corporate dominance and lack of accountability, and for

relief for rising student debt and the mortgage foreclosure crisis then rocking the US economy, although many in the movement prided themselves in not issuing clear demands.

The movement was met by government crackdowns encompassing heightened surveillance and arrests. In the US such crackdowns, combined with the limited involvement of minorities and the absence of a clear agenda, led to the movement's quick demise. But it left a lasting legacy in so far as it thrust issues of rising economic and social inequality and inordinate corporate influence into the public domain and political discourse, as evident in subsequent local and national elections and the rise of the populist wings of both the Democratic and Republican parties. The changed terms of political and policy debate on inequality and corporate accountability was apparent in many other countries as well, although this did little to dent economic and social inequalities during the rest of the 2010s.

The Black Lives Matter movement also emerged in the US and spread to other countries with long histories of entrenched anti-black racism and violence, such as Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom. It emerged in July 2013 following the acquittal of the vigilante killer of Trayvon Martin in 2012, and was further galvanised in 2014 by police killings of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Eric Garner in New York, and Tamir Rice in Cleveland. It soon became a national movement with dozens of chapters across the country that organised protests against the endless killings of African American men and women, girls and boys by vigilantes and the police. The movement also sought to promote and affirm African American struggles and empowerment in other walks of life.

The movement drew its inspiration from – but sought to transcend – the agendas, tactics, and structures of older civil rights and other social movements in the US. In its guiding principles and ambitions, it sought to embrace enduring Pan-Africanist aspirations. Befitting the times, it actively incorporated social media activism. In fact, it drew its name from the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter. Predictably, despite overwhelming support in the black community and sizable segments of the white community, the movement was met with dismissive racist rhetoric trumpeting 'All Lives Matter', 'Blue Lives Matter' and 'White Lives Matter'.

The movement proceeded to flex its political muscles during the 2016 presidential primaries and elections. A country that had entered the 2010s basking in the fantasies of a post-racial dispensation, with the 2008 election of its first black president, the suave and cosmopolitan Barack Obama, was rudely awakened to the racist backlash of Trump's election in 2016. The election of an avowed bigot, boisterous buffoon and incorrigible liar, which

brought white supremacy out of the American closet, amplified the fierce urgency of the Black Lives Matter movement's antiracist crusade.

The juxtaposition of democratic recessions, resistance and renewal is equally evident when it comes to the Me Too movement, which also first emerged as a hashtag, following sexual harassment and assault accusations against the Hollywood mogul, Harvey Weinstein, in October 2017. Legions of famous celebrities, including Kenya's renowned Oscar winner, Lupita Nyong'o, revealed their dreadful encounters with Weinstein, and many other women were emboldened to expose their own sexual predators. Before long, the hashtag #MeToo gained global currency and mushroomed into a movement for women's social justice and empowerment in pursuit of the persistent dreams of generations of feminists.

The Me Too movement pushed for changes in national legislation and policies on sexual harassment and assault. As it grew and became more transnational, it broadened its demands and was translated into local languages, idioms and struggles against widely prevalent gender based violence, eliminating gender inequalities, and raising women's representation in employment, business, media, educational institutions, government agencies and public life. In other contexts, the movement championed the emancipation of marginalised communities.

Out of the movement, and the already well-established women's movements around the world, poured voluminous studies and data on the appallingly high levels of sexual violence and femicide in virtually every country. Femicide manifested itself in the deliberate killing of women and girls through intimate partner violence, torture and misogynist murders, honour and dowry-related killings, deaths resulting from genital mutilation, as well as killings of women due to accusations of sorcery and witchcraft, as a 'weapon of war' in armed conflicts, and by criminal gangs, drug dealers and human traffickers, not to mention killings of women and girls because of their aboriginal and indigenous status, and their sexual orientation and gender identity.

There was also femicide associated with female infanticide and gender-based sex selection feticide. According to a report by the United Nations, in some of the most affected countries including Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Montenegro, Albania, Vietnam and Pakistan, gender ratios at birth ranged from 109.9 to 117.6 boys per every 100 girls (Laurent 2013). Another UN report, *Gender Equality: Striving for Justice in an Unequal World* (for which I served as one of the editors) shows that by the early 2000s there were already tens of millions of missing women in Asia led by India and China, thanks to misguided reproductive health policies and deeply entrenched

patriarchal cultures. The demographic chickens of these misguided policies and cultures came home to roost in the 2010s.

The Me Too movement helped raise global awareness and reinforced age-old struggles against sexual harassment, assault and killings and for women's empowerment. Examples include widespread protests in 2015 and 2016 against gender-based violence in Mexico, Bolivia, Colombia, Argentina and Brazil, the massive women's march in Washington in January 2017 to protest the election of a renowned misogynist to the White House, the women's strike against femicide in Israel in December 2018, recurrent protests against the rape epidemic in India and South Africa, protests against a contentious anti-rape law in nine Japanese cities in June 2019, and demonstrations in November 2019 in France, which has one of the highest domestic abuse murder rates in Europe.

In short, the women's movement continued to make progress in the treacherous and turbulent terrain of the 2010s. One indicator is women's representation in parliament. Even in the US, often an international laggard, women won a record number of seats in the 2018 Congressional elections (102 seats out of 435, i.e. 23.4 %), the highest ever, but below the world average. Similarly, in the 2019 British elections a record 220 female Members of Parliament were elected (out of 650 seats, i.e. 33.8 %).

According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union, by February 2019, women comprised 24.5 per cent of parliamentarians (both houses combined – 24.6 % for single or lower house and 24.3 % for upper house). In terms of regional averages, the Americas led with 30.6 per cent, followed by Europe (29.4 %), sub-Saharan Africa (24.0 %), Asia (19.7 %), Pacific (19.4 %), and the Middle East and North Africa were at the bottom (16.8 %). In terms of individual countries, the top dozen were Rwanda, Cuba, Bolivia, Mexico, Sweden, Grenada, Namibia, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, South Africa, Senegal and Finland, in that order.

Rising Economic Disequilibrium

The aftermath of the Great Recession of 2008–09 was one of the defining economic developments of the 2010s. It was precipitated by financial crisis in the US, which was triggered by the collapse of the subprime housing market bubble. It became the deepest and longest recession in the country's history since World War II. The financial crisis has been attributed to lax public monetary policy, slack regulation of financial institutions, high levels of household and corporate debt, international trade imbalances and poor corporate governance and accountability. For example, in the US household debt rose from 77 per cent of disposable income in 1990 to 127 per cent in

2007. In some European countries, such as Denmark, Iceland, Ireland, the Netherlands and Norway, such debt even surpassed 200 per cent.

The Great Recession left a trail of wanton economic devastation mostly in the US and Europe. In the US, between 2007 and 2009, real GDP declined by 4.3 per cent, the S&P 500 index dropped by 57 per cent, unemployment rose to 10 per cent, home prices fell by 30 per cent, the poverty rate jumped to more than 15 per cent of the population, and the net worth of American households and non-profit organisations fell by 20 per cent, from US\$ 69 trillion to US\$ 55 trillion. In some European countries, such as Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Italy and Portugal, the crisis became so severe that they were forced to default on national debt and seek bailouts from the European Union, European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

To contain the contagion and revive growth, many governments enacted fiscal stimulus packages, and austerity measures comprising tax increases and reductions in social benefits programs. For their part, central banks cut rates and adopted quantitative easing, an expansionary monetary policy of injecting liquidity into the economy by buying assets. Rates of recovery in the 2010s were predictably slow and uneven, and varied by country and community, as well as the eternal structured inscriptions of class, ethnicity/race, and age.

It is generally agreed the Great Recession accelerated the growth of economic and social inequalities in the US and around the world. This was one of its major consequences. Tens of millions of people lost their jobs, assets and livelihoods, as well as control over their lives, dignity and hope for the future. The policy responses favoured capital over labour, the wealthy at the expense of the middle and working classes, financial services rather productive sectors. Fear, uncertainty, rage and distrust of governments captured by business and often self-serving elites flared into a political and social inferno in many countries.

This is the combustible brew that greeted the 2010s, spawning widespread political instability and social struggles that gave rise to toxic tribalisms and populisms that were most effectively mobilised and manipulated by right-wing forces, as well as heightened recessions of, and resistances for, democracy, examined in the previous sections.

Employment was particularly battered. Employment trends during the 2010s reflected rates and patterns of economic growth and changing economic organisation. According to the ILO's 2019 *World Employment Social Outlook*, from 2011–18 the world economy grew at an average rate of 3.6 per cent, a slight dip from 3.9 per cent in 2001–10 (International Labour Organisation, 2019: 8-12). The percentage of the working age population

in employment fell during the Great Recession and its immediate aftermath, and rose slowly thereafter, although by 2018 it was down to 58.4 per cent compared to 62.2 per cent in 1993. The majority of jobs were in informal employment, which in 2016 accounted for 2 billion jobs or 61 per cent of all jobs. In terms of sectors, the share of manufacturing employment generally fell, while that of services rose and by 2018 the latter accounted for almost half of all employment.

Working conditions in both informal employment and services including the emerging gig economy largely remained poor. Nearly 700 million workers in low and medium income countries in 2018 lived in extreme or moderate poverty. The deficits in decent work remained alarmingly high, afflicting the majority of the 3.3 billion people employed globally, who suffered from persistent economic insecurity and lack of equal opportunities for their well-being. Average real wage growth remained low and fluctuated, rising in some years and falling in others.

The unemployment rate in 2018, at 5 per cent, was the same as in 2008, and lower than the 5.6 per cent in 2009. Also evident was the prevalence and in some cases growth of underemployment or labour underutilisation. Needless to say, employment rates and conditions varied quite considerably according to levels of development, gender and for the youth. Overall, employment indicators tended to be worse for low income than high-income economies, and those in between, and in terms of gender for women compared to men, and were particularly challenging for the youth (International Labour Organisation 2019:8-12).

For many countries, employment was a key feature of the difficult aftermath of the Great Recession and played an important role in engendering and sustaining income and wealth inequalities. Reports on growing global inequalities within and across countries abound in the academic literature, media and publications of development agencies, think tanks and NGOs.

For example, according to Credit Suisse's *Global Wealth Databook 2018*, 64 per cent of the world's adult population held less 2 per cent of global wealth, while less than 10 per cent of the wealthiest individuals owned 84 per cent of global wealth, and the richest 1 per cent owned 45 per cent (Credit Suisse, 2018: 4-11). The growth of high net worth individuals – those with net worth assets of more than US\$ 1 million – was staggering.

While the largest numbers of the world's high net worth individuals (HNWIs) were in the US (41 % in 2018), Europe and China (7 %), they rose even faster in Africa, the world's least developed continent. According to the *World Wealth Report 2018*, the size of HNWIs in Africa in 2017 reached 169,970 who had a combined wealth of US\$ 1.7 trillion (0.9 %

out of the 18.1 million HNWIs globally and 2.4 per cent out of US\$ 70.2 trillion global HNWI wealth) (World Wealth Report, 2019:7).

Oxfam did much to publicise the scourge of growing inequalities in a series of alarming reports published to coincide with the World Economic Forum, the Davos jamboree of masters of the universe. Its report in 2015 showed the richest 1 per cent increased its share of the world's wealth from 44 per cent in 2009 to 48 per cent in 2014, while the least well-off 80 per cent owned just 5.5 per cent. In its 2017 report, entitled *Economy for the 99 per cent*, it bemoaned the fact that eight multi-billionaires owed as much wealth as the poorest half of the world's population (Oxford 2015, 2017, 2019). Its 2019 report claimed the wealth of 2,200 billionaires worldwide grew by 12 per cent, while for the poorest half it fell by 11 per cent.

Oxfam blames the obscene disparities on capital squeezing workers and producers while executives are grossly overpaid, crony capitalism and state capture, super-charged shareholder capitalism and tax avoidance by the rich. As might be expected, the debate on global inequalities is extremely heated. Inequality received its intellectual imprimatur in Thomas Piketty's academic blockbuster, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, published in 2013 that offered a voluminous and compelling account of wealth and income inequality in the US and Western Europe over the last three centuries (Piketty 2014).

Piketty's best-selling book received as much acclaim as criticism for its thesis, methodology and conclusions underscoring how high the stakes are. In a lead story in its issue of 30 November 2019 *The Economist*, the haughty British magazine, returned to the topic with a predictable verdict, 'Inequality Illusions' (Economist 2019). It argues that the idea of soaring inequality rests on shaky analytical grounds and problematic data. Nevertheless, the magazine still conceded, 'And even if inequality has not risen by as much as many people think, the gap between rich and poor could still be dispiritingly high' (Economist 2019).

In the 2010s several global income inequality databases were created, such as the World Bank's PovcalNet, the World Inequality Database, the OECD's Income Distribution Database, the University of Texas Inequality Project Database, and The United Nations University's World Income Inequality Database. Each focuses on a particular set of issues. Much of this work is reflected in the UNDP's *Human Development Report 2019*, which makes sobering reading (United Nations Development Program, 2019:1-4).

The report offers five key observations. 'First, while many people are stepping above minimum floors of achievement in human development, widespread disparities remain'; 'Second, a new generation

of severe inequalities in human development is emerging, even if many of the unresolved inequalities of the 20th century are declining'; 'Third, inequalities in human development can accumulate through life, frequently heightened by deep power imbalances'; 'Fourth, assessing inequalities in human development demands a revolution in metrics'; and 'Fifth, redressing inequalities in human development in the 21st century is possible – if we act now, before imbalances in economic power translate into entrenched political dominance' (United Nations Development Program 2019:1-4)..

The report urges the development of a new framework for analysing inequality that goes beyond income ('A comprehensive assessment of inequality must consider income and wealth. But it must also understand differences in other aspects of human development and the processes that lead to them'); beyond averages ('The analysis of inequalities in human development must go beyond summary measures of inequality that focus on only a single dimension'); and beyond today ('Inequalities in human development will shape the prospects of people that may live to see the 22nd century') (United Nations Development Program, 2019:5).

In the 2010s, concerns over inequalities in income, wealth, capabilities and opportunities became widespread across political divides. While gaps in basic capabilities (such as access to basic education and health) across the world narrowed, they grew in terms of enhanced capabilities (including life expectancy at older ages and access to tertiary education). In the words of the UNDP report, 'In all regions of the world the loss in human development due to inequality is diminishing, reflecting progress in basic capabilities' (United Nations Development Program 2019:49).

Globally, the loss fell from 23.4 per cent in 2010 to 20.2 per cent in 2018, ranging from 35.1 per cent to 30.5 per cent for sub-Saharan Africa on one end, to 16.1 per cent to 11.7 per cent for Europe and Central Asia on the other. The percentage with primary and secondary education grew more rapidly than tertiary education between 2007 and 2017 in all world regions. For sub-Saharan Africa it grew by about 9 per cent and less than 2 per cent, respectively, so that by 2017 more than 40 per cent of the population had primary education compared to 2 per cent with tertiary education. The ratios for the developed countries were more than 95 per cent and 25 per cent, respectively.

But not everyone benefited equally in the rising provision of basic capacities as millions of vulnerable populations remained trapped in the insidious horizontal inequalities of discriminatory policies and restrictive legal frameworks, and the dynamics of deeply entrenched historical, market, cultural and gender biases that blocked them from meaningful and

ameliorative social, economic and political participation. The UNDP report calls for more refined and timely studies of inequality using universally recognised statistics and comprehensive inequality databases.

The Great Recession did not affect all world regions equally. As noted above, many developing countries largely escaped its worst effects, although they experienced slower growth. Many of the economies in South America went into recession reflecting reduced demand in their main North American and European markets for their predominantly primary commodity exports.

Economic growth continued in much of Africa, save for countries like South Africa that went into recession, but at lower rates than before. This reflected the resilience of the continent's recovery since the 1990s and the re-orientation of its major trading partners from the Western countries to the rising economic giants of Asia, especially China and India, where growth remained robust, as it was in Indonesia and Bangladesh. For its part, South Korea barely escaped recession.

The uneven effects and limited impact of the Great Recession on China and India pointed to an emerging phenomenon in the world economy that accelerated in the 2010s, namely, the decoupling of growth trajectories between the historically dominant economies of Western Europe, the US and Japan and the emerging economic powerhouses of the twenty-first century. This is another major consequence of the Great Recession that became more apparent in the 2010s and is leading to the reshuffling of global hegemonies and hierarchies, which will be discussed in the next section.

While the heady projections of the future made in the late 2000s and early 2010s for some of the emerging economies in the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) and other configurations (MINT – Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria, Turkey; and Next 11 – Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, Turkey, South Korea and Vietnam), have faded, the fact remains these economies assumed a much greater share of global economic output, a trend that continued in the 2010s.

For example, as I noted in my book on *Africa's Resurgence* referred to earlier, between 1990 and 2012 the relative share of the BRICS of World GDP increased by some 3.6 times so that they accounted for 56 per cent of world GDP growth. By 2012 the BRICS claimed about 20 per cent of world GDP compared to 24 per cent for the European Union and 21 per cent for the US. The BRICS accounted for 43 per cent of world reserves of foreign exchange, and increased their share of total world trade to 21.3 per cent as compared to 25 per cent for the EU and 27 per cent for the US.

Shifting Global Hierarchies and Hegemonies

Clearly, global hegemonies and hierarchies shifted in the 2010s at global and regional levels. In terms of intra-regional shifts, World Bank data shows that, in Africa, Nigeria overtook South Africa to become the continent's largest economy in 2012 (US\$ 459.4 billion to US\$ 396.3 billion). In East Africa, Ethiopia overtook Kenya as the largest economy in Eastern Africa in 2015 (US\$ 64.6 billion to US\$ 64.0 billion). In terms of purchasing power parity (PPP), by 2018 the size of the Nigerian economy was US\$ 1,117.4 billion compared to South Africa's US\$ 768.3 billion, while it was US\$ 219.0 billion for Ethiopia and US\$ 176.4 billion for Kenya. In PPP terms, in 2018 Egypt's economy was actually the continent's largest, at US\$ 1,189.0 billion.

An even more remarkable development during the 2010s was the rising share of the global economy by middle-income countries. According to a World Bank report, from the 2000s to the mid-2010s their share rose from 17 per cent to 35 per cent (4 per cent to 8 per cent for lower middle income countries and 13 per cent to 27 per cent for upper middle income countries) (World Bank 2018). In the meantime, the share of global GDP by higher income countries declined from 83 per cent to 64 per cent during the same period. In terms of purchasing power parity, in 2018 the middle-income countries claimed 53.6 per cent of global GDP (US\$ 72.7 trillion out of US\$ 135.5 trillion). The respective shares for the lower middle income and upper middle income countries was US\$ 22.9 trillion and US\$ 49.7 trillion, which translated into 16.9 per cent and 36.7 per cent of the global economy, respectively.

The biggest economic story of the decade, indeed, the last thirty years was the exponential rise of China. In terms of purchasing power parity, China overtook the US as the world's largest economy in 2014. By 2018, the size of the Chinese economy towered at US\$ 25.3 trillion, compared to US\$ 20.7 trillion for the American economy, although in terms of per capita incomes the latter was still ahead – US\$ 63,390 compared to US\$ 18,140. China's re-emergence as the world's largest economy returned the country to a position it had enjoyed a few centuries before. This phenomenal growth enabled China to lift hundreds of millions of people from poverty – an achievement almost unparalleled in human history.

The story of China is an integral part of Asia's resurgence into the world's economic centre, and the historic decline of Europe and North America that have been dominant since the first industrial revolution. In 2018, the five leading Asian economies, China, India, Japan, Indonesia and South Korea,

accounted for 34.5 per cent of the world economy. By the end of the 2010s, four Asian countries were among the top ten economies in the world: China (US\$ 25.3 trillion in 2018), the United States (US\$ 20.7 trillion), India (US\$ 10.4 trillion), Japan (US\$ 5.6 trillion), Germany (US\$ 4.6 trillion), Russia (US\$ 3.9 trillion), Indonesia (US\$ 3.4 trillion), Brazil (3.3 trillion), France (US\$ 3.1 trillion), and the United Kingdom (US\$ 3.0 trillion).

Africa seemed nowhere near achieving Asia's extraordinary feat, although it became popular in the 2010s to celebrate Africa Rising/Rising Africa. The new rhetoric of Afro-optimism clearly sought to countervail the Afro-pessimism rampant during the continent's 'lost decades' of the 1980s and 1990s. The media often trumpeted that six or seven of the world's ten fastest growing economies were in Africa. In 2018 there were five (Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire, Libya, Ethiopia and Senegal).

But the reality is that no African country has yet to achieve decades of high and sustained economic growth experienced in Asia. This is clear from the fact that the list of Africa's fastest growing economies shifts ever so often. Many of the Asian tigers consistently achieved growth rates that were far above population growth for three decades or more. According to data from the International Monetary Fund, Africa's growth rate, which reached 6 per cent in 2005 fell to 5.8 per cent in 2010, to 3.5 per cent in 2015, and rose slightly to 3.8 per cent in 2018, remained too low to achieve profound transformation in human development. It is instructive that Africa's growth rates during these years were below the averages for the developing economies as a whole (7.2 % in 2005, 7.4 % in 2010, 4.3 % in 2015 and 4.9 % in 2018).

The rise of Asia, led by China, which was consolidated in the 2010s, has generated an extensive literature. This historic transformation has been attributed to all sorts of complex historical, political, socio-economic and geopolitical factors and forces. It is possible to argue that after World War II, and for some after independence, Asian countries constructed far more cohesive and strategic developmental states, undergirded by inclusive economic, political and social institutions, and massive investments in human capital development, than other regions in the global South. Also, they aggressively pursued state capitalism, which was reinforced following the Asian crisis of 1997, in the face of fierce opposition and often misguided advice from the gendarmes of the Washington Consensus of neoliberal free market fundamentalism.

It was quite clear that the 2010s witnessed historic shifts in global power from Euro-America to Asia in general, and from the US as the sole post-Cold War superpower to fierce hegemonic rivalry with China, the ascendant

superpower of the twenty-first century. One British academic and journalist, Martin Jacques, goes so far as to argue in a recent commentary in the British newspaper, *The Guardian*, that ‘This decade belonged to China. So will the next one’. He noted that ‘Prior to the western financial crisis, it had been seen as the new but very junior kid on the block. The financial crash changed all that’, which had huge consequences for the western world’s ‘stability and self-confidence’ (Jacques 2019).

The West, Jacques continues, has displayed ‘a kaleidoscope of emotions from denial, dismissal and condemnation to respect, appreciation and admiration; though there is presently much more of the former than the latter. The rise of China has provoked an existential crisis in the US and Europe that will last for the rest of this century. The west is in the process of being displaced and, beyond a point, it can do nothing about it’ (Jacques 2019). Particularly galling has been the rise of China from a technological copycat into an innovation juggernaut for the defining technologies of the twenty-first century through its US\$ 300 billion ‘Made in China 2025’ plan. The country has also moved from a cautious global player into a more assertive power through its ambitious belt and road initiative, targeted at the developing world and designed as the harbinger of a new world order.

The 2010s represented the beginning of a historic hegemonic shift in the world system. Such shifts are very rare in world history. This is the third potential shift in the last three centuries. The first was in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that pitted Britain, the world’s first industrial nation, and Germany, the rising continental European industrial power. It culminated in World War I. The second arose out of the ashes of World War II that saw the devastated imperial powers of Europe replaced by two new superpowers, the US and the former Soviet Union. As I noted in a longer paper on current hegemonic rivalries (Zezeza 2018), such moments often reflect and are accompanied by profound political, economic and structural crises and changes.

Deluged by the cacophony of daily news, it is easy to get distracted by the endless punditry in the media and the pronouncements of American and Chinese leaders, especially with America’s unconventional and unhinged president with his twitter storms. At stake is the demise of the post-World War II order that the US created and disproportionately benefitted from. The decomposition of this order antedated Presidents Donald Trump and Xi Jinping, and will outlive them. The US and Chinese economies are so intertwined that decoupling will be extremely costly to both countries, and indeed to the rest of the world. But hegemonic transitions have their own logic that often defies the cold calculus of costs. The 2020s will tell where

the bitter rivalry between the declining and rising superpowers is headed. The rest of the world will be forced to adjust accordingly.

The Economist of 4th January 2020 offers a fascinating portrait of China's breath-taking technological advances. It shows the progress Chinese companies have made in older and imported industries including nuclear reactors, high-speed railways, electric cars, and laser technologies (*The Economist* 2020). The country has also gradually moved up in the micro-processing value chain, and is investing heavily in robotics, the internet of things and artificial intelligence. In some areas China is working hard to become a global leader, such as in 5G technology, or is already ahead, for example in the application and use of face recognition technologies. The latter technologies are a double-edged sword, as they facilitate the enforcement of state digital espionage for what some call algorithmic surveillance, whose implications for human rights and individual freedoms are portentous.

Emergence of Surveillance Capitalism

It was in the 2010s that the buzz about the Fourth Industrial Revolution reached a crescendo. As I note elsewhere, the term often refers to the emergence of quantum computing, artificial intelligence, internet of things, machine learning, data analytics, big data, robotics, biotechnology, nanotechnology, and the convergence of the digital, biological, and physical domains of life, and the digitalisation of communication, connectivity and surveillance.

The 2010s saw the maturation of technological innovations from previous decades and the emergence of several new ones. Perhaps the most ubiquitous was the explosion of social media networks, some of which were established in the decade before. The leading dozen social media sites were Facebook (established in 2004, with 2.45 billion users in 2019), YouTube (2005, 2 billion users), WhatsApp (2009, 1.6 billion users), WeChat (2011, 1.1 billion users), Instagram (2010, 1 billion users), QQ (1999, 823 million users), Qzone (2005, 572 million users), TikTok (2016, 500 million users), Sina Weibo (2009, 465 million), Twitter (2006, 330 million users), Reddit (2005, 330 million users), and Baidu (320 million). It can be seen that the US and China each have six on this list, underscoring the global dominance of the two countries in the emerging technologies of the twenty-first century.

While more and more people and businesses embraced social media, the technophilia of the early 2010s gave way to growing technophobia about its negative impact, both real and imagined. The sins of commission and omission by social media advanced by the critics are long and varied. It has been accused of fostering political polarisation, fuelling the epidemic of

fake news, facilitating online stalking, harassment and bullying, reinforcing digital divides and disparities including class distinctions, gender and racial/ethnic stereotypes, as well as compromising privacy, endangering mental health through online addiction, depression and social disengagement, especially among the youth.

Politicians generally found social media useful when it suited their needs and promoted their interests, but deplored it when it didn't promote their interests. Closure of social media platforms during political protests joined the long arsenal of state authoritarianism. Social media also became a powerful weapon of electoral manipulation as evident in the Russian interference in the 2016 American presidential elections in which they sought to damage the candidacy of Hillary Clinton and boost that of Donald Trump, as well as in the 2016 Brexit Referendum in the UK. The scandal surrounding the data firm Cambridge Analytica, which misappropriated 87 million Facebook profiles, underlined the scale of the crisis.

Concerned by these dangers, and threats to democracy and privacy, some activists called for regulation of social media companies. In 2016, the European Union became one of the first intergovernmental agencies to do so by enacting the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The European Commission declared, 'The regulation is an essential step to strengthen individuals' fundamental rights in the digital age and facilitate business by clarifying rules for companies and public bodies in the digital single market. A single law will also do away with the current fragmentation in different national systems and unnecessary administrative burdens' (European Union Commission 2016).

Given the weight of the EU, the GDPR was copied in some regulatory frameworks elsewhere. Even in the US, where such regulations were vigorously fought, demands grew for greater self-regulation by the industry, and the once feted technological wizards of Silicon Valley joined the hall of infamy occupied by politicians, journalists and left wing academics! But by the end of the decade regulatory controls had done little to curb the apparently relentless march of cyber surveillance and surveillance capitalism, as data became a new and potentially endless gold mine.

Data harnessing capacities will increasingly determine economic opportunities and divides among nations and industries. A key asset in this critical indicator and differentiator can be seen in the global distribution of high-performance computing (HPC). In 2017, the US had 33.8 per cent of global HPC capacity, followed by China with 32 per cent, Japan 6.6 per cent, Germany 5.6 per cent, and France and the UK each with 3.4 per cent. Altogether, in terms of continents Asia had 42.4 per cent, the Americas 35.4

per cent, Europe 21 per cent, and Africa and Oceania the remainder. The leading African country in this space, South Africa, had 0.2 per cent.

Big data from African countries and companies is largely stored in the vast computer farms, otherwise known as the cloud, located and controlled by large global firms. This is the face of twenty-first century digital imperialism, the transnationalisation of digital platforms from the major technological powers to the rest of the world, capturing one service industry after another from transport (Uber) to accommodation (Airbnb) and combinations thereof (Expedia, Booking.com, etc). During the era of the Atlantic slave trade Africa sold its people for trinkets, under colonialism it exported raw materials for a pittance, and now it is mortgaging its data, a dubious privilege for which it even pays for.

There were of course other technological developments in the 2010s. Smartphones and tablets became extremely popular consumer items. The release of the iPad by Apple founder and CEO, Steve Jobs, in April 2010 was almost as electrifying as that of the iPhone in June 2007. During the decade various other inventions were adopted, from 3D printing to cryptocurrency, to e-cigarettes that especially enticed the youth, to virtual assistants such as Amazon's Echo, Google Home, Apple's HomePod and also Siri, and Samsung's Bixby. Self-driving cars were also developed.

The Rebellion of Nature

The 2010s marked a decade when nature harshly rebelled against its despoliation and gradual destruction by humans. The onslaught of extreme weather events, from hurricanes, tornadoes, cyclones, tsunamis to droughts and wildfires, to melting icecaps and rising sea levels reached apocalyptic dimensions that awakened much of the world to the existential dangers, economic damages and social devastations of environmental degradation and climate change.

Global consciousness about the perilous climatic crisis facing the planet was galvanised by scientific consensus, the indefatigable work of environmental movements, increasingly animated by the youth, and renewed commitments to sustainable development goals by the international community. The synthesis reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) issued ever more alarming information on global warming, the culpability of human activities through the production of greenhouse gases, and the urgency of taking drastic action for mitigation and adaptation.

The decade opened on the heels of the acrimonious and failed 2009 Copenhagen Summit, which was largely blamed on the intransigence of the

developed countries led by the US then under the Obama administration. In the next few years a series of United Nations Climate Change Conferences were held in Mexico, South Africa, Qatar, Poland, Peru and France. The latter conference led to the adoption of the Paris Agreement. It proposed keeping climate change below 2°C, although no binding emission targets were set. Subsequent conferences were held in Morocco, Germany and Poland.

In the meantime, young people galvanised the environmental movement. The fearless Greta Thunberg, who became an influential international environmental activist, forcefully represented the youth activists. At the at the 2019 UN Climate Action Summit in New York in September 2019, she bluntly told world leaders: 'You are failing us...But the young people are starting to understand your betrayal. The eyes of all future generations are upon you. And if you choose to fail us, I say: We will never forgive you'. The school strike for climate movement she initiated in late 2018 quickly spread in many parts of the world.

Unfortunately, stubborn pockets of climate change denial persisted, most alarmingly among some right-wing politicians, a group that found its loudest proselytisers in the new presidents of the US and Brazil, Donald Trump and Jair Bolsonaro, respectively. President Trump announced the US would pull out of the Paris Agreement, while President Bolsonaro lashed out at European leaders complaining about deforestation in the Amazon. But even for the less recalcitrant governments, their rhetoric was often not matched by action.

To be sure, there was progress as a growing number of countries adopted renewable or sustainable energy. Investments in hydropower, solar power, wind power, bioenergy and geothermal energy increased. In the early 2010s, according to a 2018 report by the International Renewable Energy Agency, 'Global annual investment in renewable energy rose steadily in 2013–2015, peaking at USD 330 billion in 2015 before falling to USD 263 billion in 2016' (International Renewable Energy Agency 2018:11). Consequently, the report states, 'Since 2012, renewable power capacity installations have exceeded non-renewables by a rising margin, representing about 60 per cent of all new power-generating capacity added worldwide in 2016' (International Renewable Energy Agency, 2018:11). East Asia, led by China, was in the forefront, followed by Europe. The bulk of the investment, more than 90 per cent in 2016, came from private sources.

But the world's major polluters continued to resist cutting their emissions significantly or adequately financing global climate mitigation efforts by the developing countries. This became abundantly clear at the World Climate Change Conference held in Valencia, Spain, in December 2019, which

failed to agree on concrete actions to enhance targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. As if in reproach and final display of nature's wrath at the end of the decade, 2019 closed with ferocious infernos torching large swaths of California and Australia.

In memoriam

Let me conclude by paying homage to some of the people who left us in the 2010s whom I most admired and respected. They include artists whose music, films and comedies I delightfully ravished and relished; intellectuals, writers, journalists and publishers whose works I read and engaged with great profit; activists and statesmen whose struggles for national liberation, civil rights, and global peace ennobled our troubled world; sports icons whose talents and performances entertained and enchanted us; and captains of industry who transformed business and entire economies. The rich, large and often pioneering lives of these extraordinary men and women were everlasting affirmations and gifts of the infinite possibilities of humanity.

The artists in music, film, and dance: Aretha Franklin, B.B. King, Barry White, Chuck Berry, Koko Taylor, Diahann Carroll, Dick Gregory, Donna Summer, Dorothy Masuku, Etta James, Hugh Masekela, James Avery, Jessye Norman, John Singleton, Lena Horne, Oliver Ntunkudzi, Ruby Dee, and Whitney Houston.

Intellectuals, writers, journalists and publishers: Ali Mazrui, Binyavanga Wainaina, Catherine Graham, Chinua Achebe, Ernest Gaines, Gwen Ifill, Komla Dumor, Maya Angelou, Nadine Gordimer, Naguib Mahfouz, Plus Adesanmi, Samir Amin, and Toni Morrison.

Activists and statesmen and stateswomen: Albertina Sisulu, Boutros Boutros Gali, Elijah Cummings, Kofi Anan, Nelson Mandela, Ron Dellums, Wangari Mathaai, William Gray and Winnie Mandela.

Sports figures: Alice Coachman, Joe Kadenge, and Muhammad Ali.

Captains of industry: Steve Jobs and Bob Collymore.

Finally, this article is written in memory of my father who passed away in June 2015 at age eighty-five, and in tribute and hope for his grandchildren – my son and daughter – who came into their own in the 2010s. Such are the sublime continuities of human life on our splendid, fragile and increasingly endangered planet. It is because I fervently believe each generation has an existential and ethical responsibility to serve as custodians of past generations, its own generation, and future generations, that I see environmentalism as one of the supreme imperatives of our time.

First written, 4–5 January 2019.

References

- Abramowitz, M. J. 2018., "Democracy in Crisis: Freedom in the World 2018." Freedom House. https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FH_FITW_Report_2018_Final_SinglePage.pdf.
- Credit Suisse. *Global Wealth Report 2018*. 2018. <https://www.credit-suisse.com/media/assets/corporate/docs/publications/research-institute/global-wealth-report-2018-en.pdf>
- European Union Commission. 2016., General Data Protection Regulation. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:02016R0679-20160504&from=EN>
- Fukuyama, Francis. 1992., *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York: Free Press.
- International Labour Organization. 2019. World Employment Social Outlook Trends 2019. Geneva: International Labour Organization. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-dgreports/-dcomm/-publ/documents/publication/wcms_670542.pdf
- International Monetary Fund. 2018. "IMF DataMapper." <https://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/>
- NGDP_RPCH@WEO/OEMDC/ADVEC/WEOWORLD.
- Laurent, Claire. 2013. FEMICIDE: The Killing of Women and Girls Around the World. Academic Council on the United Nations System (ACUNS) Vienna Liaison Office. <https://acuns.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Claire-Laurent.pdf>
- Oxfam. 2015., *Wealth: Having It All and Wanting More*. <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/338125/ib-wealth-having-all-wanting-more-190115-en.pdf;jsessionid=3632B6E6986C434FADD0C61E506D145F?sequence=8>
- Oxfam. 2017., *An Economy for the 99%*. https://oi-files-d8-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/file_attachments/bp-economy-for-99-percent-160117-summ-en.pdf
- Oxfam. 2019. *Time to Care*. <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620928/bp-time-to-care-inequality-200120-en.pdf>
- Piketty, Thomas. 2014. *Capital in the Twenty-first Century*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- United Nations Development Program. 2019. *Human Development Report 2019*. New York: UNDP.
- Jacques, Martin. 2019. "This decade belonged to China. So will the next one," *The Guardian*, 31 December. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/dec/31/decade-china-west-china-ascent?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other
- The Economist. 2019. *Inequality Illusions*. 30th November.
- The Economist. 2020. "Chinese Technology: From the people who brought you fireworks..." January 4.

- The Economist Intelligence Unit. 2017. *Democracy Index 2017* “Free speech under attack”, http://www.eiu.com/Handlers/WhitepaperHandler.ashx?fi=Democracy_Index_2017.pdf&mode=wp&campaignid=DemocracyIndex2017.
- World Bank. 2018. *The Changing Wealth of Nations 2018 : Building a Sustainable Future*. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank.
- World Wealth Report 2019. 2019. <https://worldwealthreport.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2019/07/World-Wealth-Report-2019-1.pdf>
- Zeleza, Paul Tiyambe. 2014. *The Resurgence of Africa: Domestic, Global, and Diaspora Transformations*. Los Angeles: Tsehai.
- Zeleza, Paul Tiyambe. 2018. “End of Empire: Hegemonic Shifts in the World System,” *The Elephant*, 28 June. <https://www.theelephant.info/features/2018/06/28/end-of-empire-hegemonic-shifts-in-global-power/>
- Zeleza, Paul Tiyambe. 2019. “Africa’s persistent struggles for development and democracy in a multipolar world,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 53, 1: 155-170.
- Zeleza, Paul Tiyambe. 2019. “The Fourth Industrial Revolution and African Universities,” *The Elephant*, October 17. <https://www.theelephant.info/ideas/2019/10/17/gen-z-the-fourth-industrial-revolution-and-african-universities/>

