

Harnessing the Benefits of Regional Integration: Achievements, Challenges, and Prospects Within the East Africa Community (EAC)

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.60073/euper.2023.4.04>

ABSTRACT

Regional integration as an economic concept has rapidly been embraced within Africa due to its benefits. The first-generation integration initiatives in Africa were motivated by the political vision for African Unity and the need to scale up import substitution industrialization policies. The second-generation regional integration process in the early 1980s took the form of open-door policies after the continent switched from the import-substitution approach. Key stakeholders in the process were the national governments, private sectors, financial institutions, and the international donor community. The eight Regional Economic Communities (RECs) of the African Union are focused on harnessing the benefits of successful integration. The East African Community (EAC) was created by Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda in 1999 through a Treaty, to facilitate trade and economic development within its partner states. Since then, Rwanda, Burundi, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo have joined the Community. This article analyzes the integration process of the EAC, its achievements, challenges, and prospects.

KEYWORDS: economic prosperity, regional integration, peace, stability, prospects

POVZETEK

Regionalno povezovanje kot gospodarski koncept je Afrika zaradi svojih prednosti hitro sprejela. Pobude za vključevanje prve generacije v Afriki so bile motivirane s politično vizijo afriške enotnosti in potrebo po povečanju politik industrializacije nadomeščanja uvoza. Proces regionalnega povezovanja druge generacije v zgodnjih osemdesetih letih prejšnjega stoletja je prevzel obliko politik odprtih vrat, potem ko je celina zamenjala uvozni pristop. Ključne zainteresirane strani v procesu so bile nacionalne vlade, zasebni sektorji, finančne institucije in mednarodna skupnost donatorjev. Osem regionalnih gospodarskih skupnosti (REC) Afriške unije se osredotoča na izkoriščanje prednosti uspešnega povezovanja. Vzhodnoafriško skupnost (EAC) so ustanovile Kenija, Tanzanija in Uganda leta 1999 s pogodbo, da bi olajšale trgovino in gospodarski razvoj v svojih partnerskih državah. Od takrat so se Skupnosti pridružile Ruanda, Burundi, Južni Sudan in Demokratična republika Kongo. Ta članek analizira proces integracije EAC, njegove dosežke, izzive in obete.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: gospodarska blaginja, regionalna integracija, mir, stabilnost, obeti

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INTRODUCTION

The concept of regional integration is ordinarily defined in terms of geographic scope, substantive coverage, and depth of integration. Geographic scope connotes the number of countries in the arrangement while substantive coverage and depth of integration denote the nature of sectors and activities covered and the measure or degree of sovereignty a country is ready to surrender respectively². Regional integration is a building block to economic globalization³. It is achieved when member states in a trading block deepen their trading ties by promoting the free movement of goods and people along borders, reducing trade tariffs, developing skilled human capital, and maintaining peace among themselves⁴.

Traditionally the concept is understood as a way, to encourage trade flow between member states and to facilitate the efficient allocation of resources by stimulating competition and increasing the capacity of the internal market⁵. It entails the process by which two or more individual states within a region join together to cooperate and work closely to achieve common interests related to economic, security, peace, political, social, and cultural issues. Whatever the motives for integration, membership by countries is a political choice whether based on political, geographic, social, and or economic considerations. Cooperation efforts by the countries are therefore centred on overcoming barriers created by their geographical, infrastructural, and economic policy differences that impede the smooth movement of people, and flow of goods, services, capital, and ideas within their defined geographical areas.

In today's world, regional integration has been recognized and embraced by many country groupings as a practical avenue to help countries achieve peace, stability, and accelerated economic prosperity (Miguel, 2017).

A successful regional integration, therefore, requires cooperation, policy commitments, and shared sovereignty among the partner/member states. It is also premised on the existence of domestic

2 Niekerk, L.K.,1996.

3 Miguel, J., 2017

4 Lee., 2003

5 Butorina, O.V, and Borko, A. Yu, 2022.

peace and security in the countries involved; political goodwill, commitment, and mutual trust among the countries; a reasonable degree of macroeconomic stability and good financial management as well as sufficiently broad national reforms to open markets⁶.

This article examines the general concept and benefits of regional integration with specific reference to the East African Community. It commences with a general overview of the benefits of regional integration and regional integration in Africa after which focus narrows down to the case of the East Africa Community. The examination of the EAC mutates around the rationale for its initial establishment; the evolution of the Community integration process; the political and economic factors that led to the breakup of the original EAC in 1977; the admission criteria of a new partner state; achievements, challenges; conflicts, and disputes settlement mechanisms; and the prospects.

BENEFITS OF REGIONAL INTEGRATION

Regional Integration is regarded to yield varied benefits among members. Ordinarily, countries inter-se experience divisions created by geography, poor infrastructure, and inefficient policies. The divisions undoubtedly impede economic growth. Integration allows countries to overcome these costly divisions by integrating goods, services, and other market factors⁷.

Regional integration can be promoted through common physical and institutional infrastructure. In particular, the process entails countries' cooperation in a wide range of sectors covering, trade, investment, and domestic regulation; Transport, ICT, and energy infrastructure, macroeconomic and financial policies; and the provision of other common public goods such as shared security, natural resources, health, and education⁸. Cooperation by countries in different global regional countries has been done in different institutional forms with different levels of policy commitments and shared sovereignty.

On benefits, Regional Integration can lead to substantial economic gains. The scope of benefits from Regional Integration has been explained by scholars through different theories. The classic theories

6 Ibid., note 4

7 World Bank, Home Page, www.worldbank.org, Regional Integration home.

8 Ibid, Note 1

of customs and optimum currency area. The integration process thus entails among others improving market efficiency, and facilitating the flow of goods, services, capital, people, ideas, and technology. Countries are also able to share the costs of public goods or large infrastructure projects; decide policy cooperatively and have a building block for global integration. Furthermore, stronger regional integration grouping leads to peace and stability between the Member countries and provides them with greater visibility and weight internationally as they face the world as one, rather than speaking and negotiating separately.

Successful regional integration can in the long run lead to substantial economic growth, well-being, and economic development among members. (Perries, 2010) as it allows countries to improve market efficiency; and to share the costs of public goods and other large infrastructure projects. The integration also fosters a variety of non-economic objectives such as promoting regional security and political coordination among members (Carbaurg, 2011).

REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN AFRICA

In Africa, regional economic integration has a fairly long history in all parts of the continent. Since independence, African governments have embraced regional integration as an important component of their development strategies and consequently concluded a very large number of integration arrangements to the extent of creating membership overlap.⁹ Regional integration in the continent is seen by policymakers and academics as a relevant strategy to raise the level of intra-regional trade, boost economic growth, and ensure the integration of African countries into the global economic system. It is also viewed to be a lever for accelerating the structural transformation of African countries through economies of scale, improved competitiveness, more effective resource mobilization, and the promotion of the regional value chain¹⁰.

Although a good number of African leaders advocated for the integration of the African continent immediately after emerging from colonialism, elaborate initiatives were only taken to re-launch or establish economic integration in all sub-regions in the period of

⁹ Hartzenberg, T., 2011, pp.2.

¹⁰ Drapper, P., 2010

the 1970s and 1980s¹¹. The first-generation integration initiatives were motivated by the political vision of African Unity and also as a means for providing sufficient scale to import substitution industrialization policies. This inward-looking strategy however failed to succeed due to too small and poor national market, high input costs that adversely affected transformation and export, lack of commitment and support from national governments, and lack of efforts to create unified markets for private operators¹².

The second-generation regional integration process in Africa took place in the early 1980s in the form of open-door policies after the continent switched from the import-substitution approach. The second-generation process was collectively driven by the national governments, private sectors, financial institutions, and the international donor community.

Over time, regional integration has tremendously gained prominence, and today, the promotion of regional integration in Africa remains an important economic and political goal in Africa. As such there are eight Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in Africa that are mirrored on geographical regions. The RECs comprise of Economic Community of Central Africa States (ECCAS), Economic Organizations for Western African States (ECOWAS), South African Development Cooperation (SADC), Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Common Market for Eastern and Central Africa (COMESA), Arab Maghreb Union (UMA) and Community of Sahel – Saharan States (CEN-SAD).

THE EAST AFRICA COMMUNITY AND ITS INTEGRATION EVOLUTION

The East Africa Community (EAC) is one of the eight (8)¹³ Regional Economic Communities (RECs) that form the building blocks of the African Union. The Community is a regional inter-governmental organization established in 1999 through a Treaty¹⁴, to facilitate trade and economic development within its founder member states of

11 Nickerk, L.K.,1996. Regional Integration: Concepts, Advantages, Disadvantages, and Lessons of Experience.

12 Ibid.

13 The Community for Central Africa States (ECCAS), (18 October 1983), South Africa Development Community (SADC) (17 August 1992), Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) Jan. 1986), Arab Maghreb Union (UMA) (February 1989), Community of Sahel – Saharan States (CEN-SAD) (14 February 1998), and Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) (December 1994).

14 Treaty Establishing the East Africa Community, signed in 1999 by the Heads of States of Kenya, Tanzania, and Tanzania, and entered into force on 7th July 2000.

Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. The operations and activities of the East African Community are guided by both its Mission and Vision which strive to widen and deepen economic, political, social, and cultural integration to improve the quality of life of the people of East Africa through increased competitiveness, value-added production, trade, and investments.

The genesis of East African integration dates back to the pre-colonial period. 1892 – In 1917, Kenya and Uganda formed a customs Union which the then Tanganyika and now Tanzania joined in 1927. All three countries were then under British rule. The move by the trio was informed by their differing economic orientation which invariably posed compatibility problems¹⁵. Therefore, to strengthen their economic links, the three countries further in 1948 formed the East African High Commission (EAHC) with a unified income tax. Immediately after the colonial period in the 1960s, the EAHC was replaced by the East African Common Service (EACSO), which fundamentally was too closely associated with the pre-independence structure. Attempts to put in place a Central Bank however faltered in 1965, and so were the plans to introduce a common market.

Despite the drawbacks, aspirations for regional cooperation among the three countries remained alive. Consequently, in 1967, the first East African Community was established and Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda agreed to cooperate on a wide spectrum of economic and social issues¹⁶. Despite the extensive integration milestone, the first EAC accomplished, the Community nevertheless collapsed in 1977.

The collapse of the Community was attributed to four major factors namely; lack of steering functions, the unequal distribution of benefits, the purely inter-governmental (interstate) nature; and the differences of opinion between leading players, particularly the Ugandan President Idi Amin and Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere. Within the economic field, Uganda and Tanzania were substantially export-oriented while Kenya had a domestic-focused economy a fact that rapidly favored the country's financial sector development.

The collapse of the first EAC did not however sweep away the spirit

15 Stefan Reith, & Moritz Boltz, (2011), *The East African Community, Regional Integration between Aspirations and Reality*, Kas International Reports

16 East African Integration: Dynamics of Equity in Trade, Education, Media and Labour, Page 5, Society for International Development

for cooperation among the three-member countries. Accordingly, the three countries in the Mediation Agreement¹⁷ for sharing Assets and Liabilities that they negotiated after the dissolution of EAC agreed to explore areas for future cooperation and to make concrete arrangements for such cooperation¹⁸. As such, the trio states continued to cooperate through individual multilateral Agreements between 1993 and 1997 on diverse sectors including security.

In 1993, the Heads of State through an Agreement¹⁹ established the Permanent Tripartite Commission for East African Co-operations to act as a coordination institution. On 14 March 1996, the Secretariat of the Commission was launched in Arusha, marking the commencement of full East African Cooperation operations. Buoyed by the desire to consolidate regional cooperation, the East African Heads of State at a meeting held in Arusha on 29 April 1997 directed the Permanent Tripartite Commission to commence the process of transforming the Agreement establishing the Permanent Tripartite Commission for East African Co-operation into a Treaty. The Commission undertook the negotiation process involving member states and the public and finalized the Treaty for the Establishment of East African Community within three years. The Treaty that was eventually signed on 30 November 1999, in Arusha by the Heads of State of Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania came into effect on 7 July 2000, giving birth to the present East African Community.

To avoid the pitfalls that crippled the first EAC, elaborate management measures were put in place including the enactment of the Customs Management Act²⁰. The measures comprised setting up permanent institutions to manage the cooperation; ensuring fair distribution of the benefits of cooperation by designing transitional customs regulations to protect the Tanzania and Ugandan economies from the dominance of Kenyan exports; and allowing civil society and market forces to play a more prominent part. The powers of the interstate institutions however remained an issue since all major decisions regarding the Community require the consensus of the member states.

17 The East Africa Community Mediation Agreement was signed on 14 May 1984 to provide for the Pision and sharing of Assets and Liabilities of the Former East African Community that was dissolved in 1977.

18 Article 14 (14.02) First Schedule to the East Africa Community Mediation Agreement signed on 14 May 1984.

19 Agreement for establishing the Permanent Commission for East African Co-operation was signed on 30 November 1993.

20 East Africa Community Customs Management Act 2004.

The countries of Rwanda and Burundi joined the membership of EAC on 1 July 2007, South Sudan joined on 16 April 2016, and the Democratic Republic of Congo joined on 11 July 2022. The application by the Federal Republic of Somalia to become a member is undergoing the verification²¹ process.

ADMISSION PROCESS OF NEW MEMBERS TO THE COMMUNITY

The admission of a new member state to the EAC is guided by the provisions of the Treaty Establishing the Community. Under Article 3 (2) of the Treaty when a country applies to join as a partner, the Community looks into geographical proximity to and inter-dependence between the applicant and the Partner States; its acceptance of the Community; adherence to universally acceptable principles of good governance, democracy, the rule of law, observance of human rights and social justice; potential contribution to the strengthening of integration within the East African region; establishment and maintenance of a market-driven economy; and the compatibility of the applicants social and economic policies with those of the Community.

After the preliminary consideration of the application, the Community sends a verification mission comprising experts from each Partner State to assess the country's suitability to be admitted into the Community. In assessing the country's suitability, the verification mission also reviews the current status of the applicant in international law. The report of the verification Mission is considered by the Council of Ministers which makes recommendations to the EAC Heads of State for final decision.

GEOGRAPHICAL SCOPE OF EAST AFRICA COMMUNITY

At the inception stages, the geographical scope of the East Africa Community focused on territories of Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. With time and to widen the market, membership was opened to Rwanda and Burundi and subsequently to South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. A fundamental criterion for admission into the Community however remains the geographical proximity to and inter-dependence between the applicant and the Partner States as stipulated under Article 3(2) of the establishment Treaty.

21 The 22nd Communiqué of the Summit of the Heads of States of the EAC Member States held on 22 July 2022 directed the EAC Secretariat to fast-track the verification process of Somalia's application.

ACHIEVEMENTS BY EAST AFRICA COMMUNITY

The integration process of the re-launched EAC is premised on a structured roadmap to be realized through four stages as espoused in the Treaty establishing the Community. Article 5(2) of the Treaty provides for the establishment of a Customs Union, a Common Market, a Monetary Union, and a Political Federation. Unlike other federations in Africa, the EAC is hailed for setting sight quite high by enshrining a political union²² in its founding Treaty. Currently, the EAC region has a total population of 283.7 million and a GDP of US\$ 305.3 billion²³.

In terms of achievements, the East Africa Community is often cited as one of the fastest-growing regional economic blocs in the world. Since its establishment, the community has gradually and steadily taken milestone steps aimed at widening and deepening cooperation among its Partner States in various areas of their mutual benefits including in political, economic, judicial, legislative, and social sectors. The Community's current membership of seven countries and one application under active consideration from the initial three in 2002 is a clear testimony to its fast growth.

Custom Union. As a first step, the Partners states in March 2004, signed the Customs Union Protocol which entered into force on 1 January 2005 with the main objective to facilitate inter and intra-regional trade in goods and services through the gradual elimination of internal tariffs and establishment of common external tariff on imports from third countries. In that respect, the Protocol created a Customs Union that provided for the establishment of four elements namely, i) a Common External Tariff (CET) on imports (tariff structure of 0% for raw materials, 10% for intermediate goods, and 25% for finished goods) from third countries and to gradually eliminate internal tariffs; ii) EAC Rules of Origin (RoO) criteria, including Certificates of Origin and Simplified Certificates of Origin; iii) the internal elimination of tariffs for goods meeting the EAC RoO criteria and; iv) the elimination of Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs).

In essence, the Community by enacting the Customs Union intended to promote production efficiency, enhance domestic, cross-border, and foreign investment, and also promote economic development and

22 Article 5(2) of the Treaty Establishing East Africa Community.

23 East Africa Community Home page, about EAC available at: www.eac.int/trade.

diversification in industrialization within the region²⁴. Both Rwanda and Burundi joined the Customs Union on 1 July 2009, and eventually, the gradual process of establishing a Customs Union was completed in January 2010.

Under the Customs Union pillar, the EAC has increased a variety of aspects of inter and intra-regional trade. Through the implementation of custom unions and common markets, the Community has been able to eliminate most of the trade barriers within its internal borders. The establishment of a Single Customs Territory (SCT) simplified procedures for clearance at the ports of entry and exits, at weighbridges, and roadblocks have been simplified. All intraregional trade goods are cleared under the SCT regime. Moreover, the procedures for handling non-EAC Certificates of Origin, non - non-recognition of quality marks issued by the EAC Bureau of Standards, and retesting of products have been put in place through the enactment of the EAC Elimination of NTBs Act 2017²⁵ and adoption of the EAC Customs Valuation Manual document that provide guidelines on how to implement and uniformly interpret EAC Customs valuation provisions within the Community. The guidelines have been very helpful in preventing possible valuation disputes. To ensure efficiency, the Community established National and Regional Committees to identify and monitor the implementation of the Customs Union.

The removal of non-tariff barriers has enhanced bilateral trade between member states including intra-EAC Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) as well as FDI from outside. Some barriers however remain related to non-harmonized technical regulations which are hindering the seamless flow of goods and movement of people between the member states. In the case of Kenya and Tanzania, the removal of 50 non-tariff obstacles increased Kenya's exports to Tanzania from Ksh. 31.4 billion in 2020 to Ksh. 45.6 billion in 2021. Also, imports from Tanzania doubled from Ksh. 27.2 billion in 2020 to Ksh. 50.1 in 2021. Overall, the total trade value moved from Ksh. 58.6 billion to Ksh. 95.7 billion in 2021²⁶.

As a measure to build a strong export-led economic sector each of the Partner States has established and gazetted Export Processing Zones (EPZ) and Special Economic Zones (SEZ). The Zones aim at

24 Article 3 of the Treaty Establishing East African Community.

25 The EAC Elimination of Non-Tariff Barriers Act 2017 was assented to by the EAC Heads of State in April 2017

26 East Africa Business Daily, (2022)

spurring industrialization hence they provide specific incentives for investors operating within the Community. The incentives under these arrangements are fiscal and non-fiscal comprising corporate tax holidays, duty, and VAT exemptions²⁷.

On **tax harmonization**, the Community in line with Article 83(c)²⁸ of the EAC Establishment Treaty has put in place appropriate legal regimes and policy frameworks. The EAC Model Investment Treaty²⁹ is being used to guide negotiations of Tax Treaties with other countries and third Parties. Two policies namely, the Policy for the Harmonization of Income Taxes, and the Policy for Harmonization of VAT and Excise Duties were developed in 2014 and are currently in operation.

To ease **mobile communication connectivity**, the region is implementing the EAC Broad Band Infrastructure Network Project. A -Network- Area has been established with lower calling rates. Harmonization of the calling rates has been done and today, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania Rwanda have already implemented the common calling rates on mobile communications within their territorial boundaries.

In the infrastructure sector, several regional road and energy projects have been accomplished. These include the construction of the Athi River- Namanga - Arusha Road, and Voi- Taveta - Arusha Road all connecting Kenya and Tanzania. Malindi - Lungalunga -Tanga road design is underway. Through the EAC Vehicle Load Control Act 2016, harmonization of Gross Vehicle weights for vehicles has been done to 56 tons for vehicles under seven axles. Cross border electrification project has also been completed linking the Kenya- Tanzania border one-stop - points of Namanga and Lunga Lunga. Generally, however, infrastructure at the national level in some of the Partner states remains a challenge.

Common Market. The establishment of the Customs Union was followed by that of the Common Market through the signing of the Protocol on the Establishment of the East African Community Common Market in November 2009. Article 104 of the East Africa Community

27 Supra Note 11.

28 Article 83(c) of the EAC Establishment Treaty provides that Partner states agree to harmonize their tax policies with a view to removing tax distortions in order to bring about a more efficient allocation of resources within the Community.

29 The East African Model Investment Treaty was adopted in 2016.

Establishment Treaty recognizes the free movement of persons, services, and labor. In that respect, the main purpose of the Common Market is to accelerate the economic growth and development of the Partner States through the attainment of free movement of goods, persons, and labor, and the rights of establishment and residence³⁰. Accordingly, under Article 5 (2) (b) and (c) of the Common Market Protocol, Partner states agreed to make the cross-border movement of persons easy, adopt an integrated border management system, remove restrictions on the movement of labor, and harmonize labor policies, programs, and legislation.

Even though the Common Market Protocol guarantees the free movement of people who are citizens of partner states and removes visa requirements, this however does not imply the intra-regional movement of the citizens of EAC Partner States is free of conditions. The protocol requires the citizens to follow the conditions imposed by national laws on grounds of public policy, security, or public health. The citizens must also possess valid and common standard travel documents for citizens in EAC. A notable achievement in this area is that in September 2019, the Community rolled out a Common standard e-East Africa Passport which individual countries are currently issuing to their citizens.

The entry into effect of the Common Market in July 2010, gave impetus to the integration implementation process of all these aspects. Thus, under the Common Union, a lot of strides have been made. This includes the reciprocal opening of border posts for 24 hours to ensure an unhindered flow of trade, humanization of entry and exit forms, and procedures for the issuance of work permits. Student passes are issued free. Kenya and Uganda have waived work permit fees while Kenya and Tanzania are conducting joint tourism promotions on a different note.

According to the 2019 African Regional Integration Index (ARII)³¹ which assesses the regional integration status and efforts in Africa, the East Africa Community has the highest average score on the free movement of people, infrastructural integration, trade integration, productive integration, and macroeconomic integration. Full achievement of

30 Article 4(2) (a) of the Common Market Protocol.

31 African Regional Integration Index (ARII) is prepared jointly by the African Union, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, (UNECA), and the African Development Bank.

free movement of people is however hindered by unfounded fear that ethnic animosity from other member states will spread. The Tanzanian population has all along been apprehensive about the possible loss of land from the overpopulated Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi.

Monetary Union. The EAC Heads of States on 30 November 2013, signed the Protocol for the Establishment of the EAC Monetary Union. Since then, however, not much has been done collectively by Partner states. Currently, negotiations are underway for the establishment of both the East African Surveillance Compliance and Enforcement Commission and the East African Financial Services Commission. At the national level Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda have each developed Fiscal Transparency Evaluations (FTEs). Kenya³² and Uganda³³ have also anchored regional fiscal surveillance in their Public Finance Management Act (PFM) laws.

The completion of these first three phases of integration gave way to the process of an **East African Political Federation**. The EAC Heads of State on 20 May 2017 adopted the Political Confederation as a transitional model of the East African Political Federation and directed commencement on the drafting of the Federation Constitution. The process towards a full Federation is actively being fast-tracked by the East African leadership to construct a powerful and sustainable East African political and economic bloc.

In the legislative and judiciary fields, the Heads of State during the 3rd Summit of EAC that was held in Arusha on 30 November 2001, inaugurated the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) and East African Court of Justice. EALA is charged with discharging functions in furtherance of the objectives of the Community. The work of the East African Court of Justice as the judicial organ of the Community is to interpret the Treaty and laws of the Community and ensure compliance by the regional bloc. Since their inauguration, the two bodies have been very active in making Community laws on matters of critical benefit to the people of the partner states as well as adjudicating on fundamental issues. In addition to legislative actions, the East African Community Council of Ministers has established various Sectorial Councils to oversee policy issues in the regional integration process.

32 The Public Finance Management Act 2015 of Kenya has Fiscal Rules on debt and deficit.

33 The Fiscal Responsibility Charter of Uganda has Rules conforming to East Africa Monetary Union Criteria.

In matters of peace and stability in the region, the Community through its peace processes patronage has made tremendous contributions in addressing Intra and inter-member state conflicts and political hostilities. In the past, the Community brokered the peace process in Burundi, and currently, the search for peace in the DRC is ongoing. The Third Inter-Congolese Consultations of the Nairobi Peace Process took place at Safari Park on 5 December 2022, under the facilitation of Kenyan former President Uhuru Kenyatta. Similarly, the EAC Heads of State in July 2015 established the Inter-Burundi Dialogue and appointed Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni to mediate political crises in Burundi. Later, in March 2016, the Heads of State appointed former Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa as a facilitator to assist President Museveni in the dialogue process. The dialogue was aimed at solving political conflict and crises triggered by the decision of the then Burundian President Pierre Nkurunziza in April 2015 to seek a third term in office.

Besides the peace patronage process, the Community has established EAC Military Industrial Facilities which are availed for shared utilization among EAC Armed Forces. Partner states are also offering training opportunities within their respective military training institutions. Military cooperation is complimented by the gathering and sharing of intelligence information within the EAC bloc by the EAC chief of Military Intelligence, Criminal Departments, and National Intelligence bodies.

Participation of stakeholders. The EAC Treaty³⁴ advocates for the participation of stakeholders in the integration and development of the Community and requires governments of Partner states to create an enabling environment for the stakeholders to thrive. Over time, the Community has to some extent witnessed growth in the participation of civil society, professionals, women, the youth, and the private sector in matters towards regional integration. The involvement of the non-state actors has not reached the desired levels. Power is still concentrated in the EAC policy organs which are political. The effect of this is that there are scenarios whereby EAC policies lack domestic constituency ownership. The former German president Horst Köhler in June 2011³⁵, warned against EAC integration that is too strongly

34 Articles 127,128 and 129 of the Treaty Establishing East Africa Community.

35 Horst Köhler was speaking in June 2011 at a conference in Arusha organized by the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the East African Community for the purpose of discussing integration issues.

focused on a small elite since such integration has a shaky foundation because it ignores the majority of people in East Africa.

As a means of enhancing continental cooperation and integration, EAC has been in constructive engagement with other Regional Economic Communities. In that case, discussions for a Single Free Trade Area and merger of the three regional blocs EAC-COMESA-SADC that commenced on 22 October 2008 during the first Tripartite Summit held in Kampala Uganda have progressed very well. It is envisaged that a merger of the three regional blocs will not only increase trade opportunities for the people but also accelerate the attainment of the aspirations of the African Union Agenda 2063³⁶ for an integrated prosperous Africa. It will also solidify the expanded region's negotiating position and bargaining power with other external economic communities including the European Union.

In terms of the resultant benefits of the EAC to each partner state, there have been different perceptions. On the positive side, the region has experienced reduced prices of goods and services arising from the free market, increased welfare of the society, improved trade policies, and improved productivity³⁷. It has also registered increased trade among its members due to harmonization and reduced tariffs. members feel reduced inflation levels as a result of collective economic policies being in place³⁸. Generally, the EAC economic integration has a positive influence on bilateral trade within and among its partner states. Despite the positive gains, some authors opine that EAC partner states do not enjoy equity in economic growth and trade flowing from the integration. Kenya is perceived to benefit hugely from the integration trading while Rwanda has received high economic growth due to heavy trade with DRC.

CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED BY THE EAST AFRICA COMMUNITY

Although the East Africa Community has made great strides in the integration, the process has nevertheless not been smooth. There have been various challenges ranging from disputes to competing interests among the partner states on various issues including governance,

36 The African Union Agenda 2063 was adopted by the African Union Heads of State Summit in January 2015, in Addis Ababa

37 Lorenzo, J., 2012.

38 Mwapachu, J.V., 2011.

borders, economic interests, and political hegemonies. Burundi has been calling for the removal of the speaker of the East African Legislative Assembly, a situation that has delayed the holding of the Heads of State Summit.

Political hostilities and competing interests between Rwanda and Uganda's top political leaders have seen frequent closure of their borders a move that is affecting cross-border trade and movement of people. At present, the borders (Gatuna One Stop Border Point) between Rwanda and Uganda have been shut since 28 February 2019. The border between Rwanda and Burundi has also been closed. These EAC states accuse each other of sponsoring political movements seeking regime change. The same situation also hit DRC where Rwanda and Uganda are viewed as the main sponsors of the standoff between the DRC Government forces and the M23. These political hostilities are occasionally disrupting the smooth flow of trade within the Community.

At times, personality differences between the political leadership of some of the member states have been a hindrance to the desired cohesion of the Community. For instance, in 2013 the differences that led to the emergence of the 'Collection of Wiling' pitting Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda were very intense to the extent of threatening to split the Community contrary to the objectives of the founding treaty.

Trade Wars: In the trade sector, despite the existence of elaborate Custom Union and Common Market promotion and protection measures, there has been all manner of trade wars pitting the partners. Trade rivalry and conflicts in the region include border closures, burning of products, blockade of some products as well as denial of the national airspace to commercial flights from partner states³⁹.

In November 2017, the Tanzania authorities burnt 6,500 live chickens imported from Kenya. The burning of poultry from Kenya was preceded by the confiscation and auctioning of 1,325 heads of cattle belonging to Kenyan herders in October 2017 by the Tanzanian authorities. The Cattle who belonged to the Maasai community of the Kenyan side were grazing on the Tanzania side of the Common border. On a related situation, Tanzania has occasionally been locking out Ugandan timber, sugar, and maize into its market while Kenya

39 Daily Nation News Paper, 25 November 2017

is reluctant to open its market to manufactured products including milk from Uganda.

Poor Infrastructure. The infrastructure network in many of the EAC Partner States is still poor. Safe for Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, and Tanzania, there is a large deficit in railway and road networks. The available road network is further degraded and congested. This situation has slowed down economic growth by increasing the cost of doing business and limiting trade and growth opportunities. Moreover, the airfreight capacity is low while the maritime sector is hampered by congestion in ports, inadequate container capacity, and transport shipment performance. To address the infrastructure challenges, the community have been engaging in project financing partnership with the East African Development Bank and the African Development Bank. Some projects undertaken through these arrangements include the Northern Corridor Road Network driven by Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda.

Weak EAC Financing Base. Apart from the assessed annual contributions from Partner States, the Community does not have a sustainable source of resources. The Community has been relying on donor funding for its integration projects. In practice, traditional donors contribute up to 65% of the budget of EAC. The reliance on donors has created incentives towards developing policies that appeal to them but which in most cases don't appeal to the interests of partner States.

The protracted and unresolved internal conflicts and political power struggles in the DRC coupled with the inter-state hostilities pitting against Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda do not promote a conducive security environment. Potential investors are therefore taken aback in making rational decisions to invest in such affected countries which would otherwise offer advantageous business space and returns.

The weak capacity of national institutions and structures quite often presents a challenge in the implementation of community decisions at the national level. This challenge also has a link to that of the interstate where the Community decisions have to be taken through consensus. Furthermore, the East Africa Legislative Assembly has been criticized for not representing the interests of the East African Community people. They are not elected directly by the East Africa Community electorate,

rather they are selected by Member States' national Assemblies, and therefore it is not known what their accountable constituency.

Other underlying challenges to the East African Community relate to Member States' multiple memberships as well as their external trade partnership engagements with other regional unions and individual countries. Practically, all member states of the EAC belong to more than one REC⁴⁰. Such arrangements have resulted in competition, and duplicity of activities, efforts, and resources that could otherwise be consolidated for effective utilization in one regional bloc. Further, they have created difficulties in the treatment of goods from those other RECs to which other member states hold membership. Supporters of multiple memberships have however argued it provides countries with various options to achieve their interests from different fronts continentally and globally.

On the external Partnership Trade engagements, there has been disunity and divergences within the community in the form, approach, and modalities of engagements. This disunity is exacerbated by the multiple memberships and inadequate harmonization of national economic policies, a fact that weighs more heavily than long-term cooperation gains. For instance, at the negotiations between the EU and EAC on the Economic Partnership (EPA), member states initially conducted negotiations in separate groups⁴¹. Notably, Tanzania initially negotiated as a member of SADC before switching abruptly to EAC when talks seemed likely to stall⁴². In the end, EAC did not get a favorable deal with EPA. In the case of Bilateral Trade with the United States, the decision by Kenya to launch negotiations directly has strained relations with other EAC member states. Kenya's action is being viewed as a continuation of her economic hegemony which for a long time has not been fully embraced by some member states.

All these instances are not healthy for a stable region as they fly against the Community's cornerstone objective and spirit of enhancing regional free trade and spurring economic development. They also have the potential to influence the perception and participation of the citizens of member states in regional integration.

40 South Sudan is in EAC, IGAD, Rwanda is in EAC, COMESA, Burundi is in EAC, ECCAS, COMESA; the Democratic Republic of Congo is in EAC, SADC, COMESA, and ECCAS.

41 Supra Note 4.

42 Ibid Note 20.

The positive step is that the inhibiting trade practices have been admitted by some of the region's top leadership and have committed to boosting trade relations with neighbors. In particular, the advent of new political leadership in Tanzania has given hope for a more robust trade environment going forward, particularly with Kenya. During the visit to Kenya, in March 2022, President Suluhu regretted the burning of the imported live chicks. According to the President, 'An order five years ago to burn 6,400 live chicks imported from Kenya was wrong. Such counterproductive acts would not feature anymore⁴³. On the same visit, President Suluhu made business commitments and trade deals with the former President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya which included eliminating 55 out of the 64 persistent non-tariff trade barriers that existed between Kenya and Tanzania in early 2021. Further, during a meeting between Kenyan President Dr. William Ruto and Tanzania President Mrs. Suluhu on 9 October 2022, in Dares Salaam, the two agreed to boost trade between the two countries by removing trade barriers effective January 2023.

CONFLICT AND DISPUTE RESOLUTION WITHIN EAST AFRICA COMMUNITY

On dispute and conflict resolution within its partner states, EAC has elaborate mechanisms that are provided for in the establishment Treaty and also protocols creating specific sectors. The mechanisms cover a wide scope including matters of interpretation of the Treaty, trade, and political disputes.

At the judicial level, the EAC Court of Justice is anchored under Article 9 of the Treaty and adjudicates disputes emanating from the Treaty, civil and commercial between state parties, non-state actors and state parties, the Community and its employees as well as the Secretary-General and state parties concerning the interpretation, application of, and compliance with treaty obligations. The Court does arbitration of investment disputes which are referred by the council of Ministers. Furthermore, private parties are, in their own right, entitled to legal remedies when their rights within the EAC Treaty are violated.

On matters of trade disputes, the Community encourages partner states to give priority to negotiations and reconciliation initiatives.

⁴³ Kenya Citizen Newspaper, Sunday, 27,2022, H.E Samia Suluhu, stated that it was wrong to burn 6,400 live chicks from Kenya.

Art. 24 of the Customs Union Protocol establishes the EAC Trade Remedies Committee to handle matters about rules of origin, anti-dumping, subsidies, countervailing measures, and safeguard measures. The Trade Regulations provide for two different avenues of dispute settlement. In one avenue, disputes be settled using good offices, conciliation, and meditation. Where there are no positive results, the Committee on Trade Remedies can then be requested to establish a panel. The panel then presents a report with recommendations to the Committee, which makes final determinations on the matter that are final and binding on the parties. Disputing parties may have recourse to arbitration. Under Art. 54 of the Common Market Protocol national constitutions, laws and administrative procedures, and competent national authorities are mandated to handle disputes.

On the political conflicts, some partner states have experienced security challenges emanating from internal elections and resource competition between different factions within countries and between the countries. In resolving the conflicts, frameworks stipulated in the Treaty as well as ad-hoc political mechanisms have been employed. Alternative Dispute-Resolution mechanisms have also been used for sustainable peace and security⁴⁴. The ADR mechanism is domesticated in all partner states of the Community. In South Sudan mediation and arbitration has been constantly used in mitigating conflicts.

Following the outbreak of the political crisis and instability in Burundi in 2014, the EAC Africa Heads of State on 13 May 2015 intervened by initiating a negotiation dialogue between key Burundian parties particularly the ruling party and the opposition. The crises had been triggered by the decision of the late President Pierre Nkurunziza to seek re-election for a third term contrary to the country's constitution. The standoff was followed by an attempted *coup detat*. The Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni was the mediator while the former Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa was the facilitator for the dialogue. Both leaders were also pivotal in the Arusha peace process of 1996 to 2005 that ended Burundi's first civil war⁴⁵.

Currently, to address the insecurity threats from the M23 militia that is operating in the eastern-northern part of DRC particularly Ituri province and northern Kivu EAC Heads of State on 20 June 2022

⁴⁴ Mugambi, K., 2017

⁴⁵ Nantulya, P., 2017

created a regional joint combat force consisting of 12000 soldiers. The mandate of the force is to assist the Congolese army in containing, defeating, and eradicating the negative forces in the eastern DRC⁴⁶. The force mandate extended to 6 months, with troops coming from countries Kenya, Burundi, Uganda, South Sudan, and Tanzania. Even though the EAC Heads of State have taken elaborate decisions and initiatives to address political disputes and conflicts within their partner states, the effectiveness of the initiatives is hindered by the principles of state sovereignty and non-interference with the internal affairs of each country.

PROSPECTS FOR THE EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY

Despite the functional teething problems, East Community Africa holds a promising future. The Community has tremendous opportunities and resources that if well planned, managed, and harnessed can create economic prosperity including sustainable peace and security which has been eluding some countries of the region.

The expanded Community is a region endowed with plenty of natural resources. It also holds a geo-strategic position including access to the sea. The huge perennial rivers within DRC contain a hydropower base that can be harnessed to provide adequate electricity for the entire region and beyond. Perhaps, the only major drawback, however, is insufficient infrastructure to produce and distribute the power.

The region's combined population of about, 283,7 million people presents a huge market base that is ideal for the growth of the region's industrial and manufacturing sectors besides providing the desired human resource expertise. Moreover, the region has plenty of arable lands and large freshwater reservoirs in the form of lakes and rivers which can boast food security through large-scale irrigation farming as well as cheap inland water transport. The re-invigoration of Ferry transport services in Lake Victoria by EAC Heads of State in May 2022, the World's largest freshwater which is shared by Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda has greatly boasted inter-regional trade.

Additionally, two of the Community's member states, Kenya and Tanzania enjoy democratic space and political stability which has continued to act as a catalyst in efforts towards the search for peace and

46 Walle, N., 2022.

political stability in some affected countries in the region. Evidentially, Tanzania and Kenya are spearheading a peace process sponsored by the Community to address the hostilities in Burundi and DRC respectively. Three countries namely Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania who are the original EAC Members share a fairly homogeneous historical and cultural outlook, a similar colonial past that formed the basis for integration in the post-colonial era.

The admission of Somalia to the membership is going to widen the Community's intra-market base for its products and services. Currently, Somalia's population stands and relies heavily on food imports. Somalia's admission issue is however being viewed with caution due to the country's political instability and security-oriented problem. The political leadership in Kenya and Tanzania will have to play a pace setting.

The possibility of the EAC merging with COMESA and SADC presents a suitable opportunity to reduce the challenges associated with multiple memberships in Regional Economic Communities. The bloc comprises 26 countries and the finalization of the merger would create one of the largest Free Trade Areas globally. The economic bloc would be characterized by a population of over 650 million people and a GDP of more than USD 1.3 trillion. The 26 countries of EAC-SADC-COMESA make up 26% of the African Union membership. A successful merger would moreover contribute to the attainment of the African Union's aspirations of a prosperous integrated continent envisaged under the African Union Agenda 2063⁴⁷.

While the Community might have more prospects, the member states will have to be aware of the possible problems associated with the admission of new members, particularly Somalia. The many problems in Somalia comprising of political instability, insecurity, religious fundamentalism, and extremists will have to be addressed seriously to stem the spread of Al-Shabaab. This coupled with differences between Kenya and Somalia emanating from maritime border disputes is likely to slow down the pace of regional integration.

Membership in the Community of the Democratic Republic of Congo is likely to be a double-edged sword for its progress. The country holds the largest resources yet is full of wars and political power struggles.

⁴⁷ Supra, Note 29.

In that regard, the Community can on one hand benefit immensely by effectively harnessing the vast natural resources. On the other hand, however, there could be an increase in a proxy resource-based war involving more community member states.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the birth, evolution, and integration of the EAC exhibits a journey full of unparalleled spirit for success. That unwavering determination has given the Community impeccable success in various areas of integration albeit hampered to some extent by an intervening variety of factors including lack of supranationally, competition of national interests, and absence of societal participation. Indeed, the growth trajectory has earned the Community global recognition to the level whereby representatives from various countries and international organizations submit their credentials to the Secretary General of the East African Community.⁴⁸

Therefore, despite the underlying challenges, it is fair to hold that, the East Africa Community remains on the path to achieving its founding objectives of one people, one destiny. Based on its achievement, going forward, the Community is also bound to be a key dependable pillar in the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), a key flagship Aspiration of the African Union Agenda 2063, that roots for a prosperous integrated Continent. In that regard, for the Community to remain on the track towards full integration and harnessing benefits for its people, it will need to seriously:

- I) Ensure the framework and modus operandi transcends the personal interests of its political leaders and harmonizes political objectives. candid and open dialogue in such cases threatening interest, unity, and founding purpose of the Community of One Destiny, One People;
- II) Address the issue of multiple memberships. Perhaps the merging of EAC-COMESA-SADC will provide the most desired results of consolidating resources, and also avoid competition and duplication of priorities;
- III) Address non-tariff barriers that are inhibiting the smooth flow of trade and infrastructure challenges. In the infrastructure sector, the Community will need to consider expanding infrastructure funding models by utilizing Private -Public Partnerships as well as Design - Finance- Build- Operate (DFBO);

⁴⁸ Supra, Note 14.

- IV) Ensure that there are competencies and strengths of the existing and new EAC institutions and those at the national level. A strong Community Secretariat is necessary to assist member states in implementing difficult Community issues at the national level. Moreover, the political will from all Partner states must be there to improve EAC institutions;

- V) Intensify involvement of private stakeholders in industrialization sectors as well as continued involvement of civil societies in the activities of the Community. Participation is important for the support of regional unification as it particularly ensures transparency, accountability, and legitimacy of the Community in the eyes of the general population.

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LEGISLATIONS

The Public Finance Management Act 2015 of Kenya on Fiscal Rules on Debt and Deficit

The Fiscal Responsibility Charter of Uganda on Rules conforming to the East Africa Monetary Union Criteria 2016

The East Africa Community Customs Management Act 2004

HEADS OF STATE COMMUNIQUE

The 22nd Communiqué of the Summit of the Heads of States of the EAC Member States held on 22 July 2022 directed the EAC Secretariat to fast-track the verification process of Somalia's application

REGIONAL TREATIES

The East African Model Investment Treaty Adopted in 2016

Treaty Establishing the East Africa Community, signed in 1999 by the Heads of State of Kenya, Tanzania, and Tanzania, and entered into force on 7 July 2000

The Agreement for the Establishment of the Permanent Commission for East African Co-operation was signed on 30 November 1993

The East Africa Community Mediation Agreement signed on 14 May 1984 to provide for the Pision and sharing of Assets and Liabilities of the Former East African Community that was dissolved in 1977