



DRC Joins the East African Community: Aligning Ideology, Economic Interest and Security for Political Federation

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Table of Contents

List of Acronyms	4
Abstract	5
1.0 Introduction	6
2.0 The Contextual Issues	6
i) Ideological Differences	7
ii) Economic Interest and National Priorities	8
iii) Security and Geopolitics	9
3.0 Policy Recommendations	10
4.0 About Efficacy Methodology	11

List of Acronyms

- BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation
- BUBU: Buy Uganda, Build Uganda
- DRC : Democratic Republic of Congo
- EAC: East African Community
- IFPRI : International Food Policy Research Institute
- NTBs: Non-Tariff Barrier
- OAU: Organization for African Union
- WHO: World Health Organization.

Abstract

The paper examines the alignment of ideology, economic interest and security within the East Africa Community. A secondary literature review and desk-based research was used. The paper echoes the circumstances that led to the collapse of the first East African Community and provide a case for future stability of the reformed EAC. We argue that without aligning ideology, economic interests and security, political federation cannot be achieved. This paper makes three policy recommendations; i) the East African countries ought to find a true north ideology, ii) The EAC should develop a well-coordinated policy response, both in practice and implementation, and iii) should clearly realign political transition, develop minimum political consensus and a unified equal approach to insecurity.

1.0 Introduction

Exhilaration engulfed the East African member states when the Summit of EAC Heads of State at the 19th Ordinary Summit admitted the newest equal partner, the Democratic Republic of Congo on 29th March 2022 (EAC, March 2022)¹. The admission of the DRC meant that the fastest growing regional bloc in Africa expanded to seven equal member states (Burundi, DRC, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda).

To copiously understand this development, we must rekindle 105 years back. In 1917, the colonies of Kenya and Uganda formed a customs union that Tanganyika joined ten years later². Subsequently, in 1947, the East African High Commission was established to facilitate colonial administration and infrastructural development like the railways³. Additionally, the emergence of distinguished African leaders and strategic collaboration strengthened EAC integration. In June 1963, Obote, Nyerere and Kenyatta declared their intention to federation, a decision that was widely panned by Kwame Nkrumah (Former President of Ghana) because it would undermine the OAU and divert the move towards Pan-African single state. He was right because the desire for a United African State was never realized.

¹ EAC (2022, March 29). The Democratic Republic of the Congo joins EAC as its 7th Member. <https://www.eac.int/press-releases/2402-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo-joins-eac-as-its-7th-member>

² The Official Gazette of the East African Protectorate (September, 1917). The East African Community <https://gazettes.africa/archive/ke/1917/ke-government-gazette-dated-1917-09-05-no-552.pdf>

Nonetheless, the three East African leaders resolved to federate. However, Obote shared Kwame's view at one point (Asteris & Kalantzakos, 2019). The need to strengthen self-reliance, consolidate independence and buttress the negotiation power of the three states in international affairs proved superior. The birth of the East African Community in the post-independence. On 6th June 1967, the EAC was established by the presidents of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda under a signed Treaty. The organization operated for the next ten years before its unfortunate collapse⁴.

This paper rekindles the circumstances that led to the collapse of the East African Community and provides a case for future sustainability of the reformed East African Community. For this homily, we argue that the success of the new East African Community into a political federation will be premised on three fundamental alignments. i) Ideological alignment ii) Economic Interest and National priorities and iii) Security and geopolitics.

2.0 The Contextual Issues

The East African Community went on to operate for 10 years between 1967 to 1977. At the point of its collapse, a number of

³ Asteris, H. & Kalantzakos, S. (2019). Rethinking the Collapse of the first East African Community (1967-1977): Lessons for the EU. [file:///C:/Users/JOHNNY/Downloads/Rethinking_the_Collapse_of_the_first_Eas%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/JOHNNY/Downloads/Rethinking_the_Collapse_of_the_first_Eas%20(1).pdf)

⁴ Robson, P. (1967). The Re-Shaping of East African Co-operation, East African Review, Vol. 3 (2), December, pp. 1-11.

factors contributed and these included;⁵ ideological differences, authority of the East African Community, the uneven level of development, the internal conflicts and geopolitical external influence. Therefore, for the renewed EAC to be sustainable, there is a need for strategic alignment of the very fabric that impelled its dissolution in 1977 (Lodompui, 2010). Furthermore, Kenya's desire to have more voting rights over other nations worsen the status quo⁶ at a time when EAC functionality was proving more intricate.

i) Ideological Differences

The collapse of the first EAC stemmed from ideological differences that proved deep. This is one of the most fundamental bases that form the building blocks of any institution. Julius Nyerere delayed the independence of Tanzania in an attempt to wait for Uganda and Kenya to attain their independence. The varying ideological differences curtailed EAC progress. For instance, the level of Kenya's capitalistic aggression on land acquisition became a major threat to Tanzania. In fact, the New

York Times (December, 1976)⁷, posits that the deep dialogical difference between capitalism and socialism led to the collapse of East African Airlines since profit was more sought by Nairobi. This made Tanzania adopt a socialist ideology in a deliberate attempt to protect its national interest as opposed to the EAC in the Arusha declaration of 1967⁸. Mittleman (2018)⁹, underscore that ideology provides the basis that drives policies in any state and that Tanzania was always advancing the concept of self-reliance, which Eken (1979)¹⁰ agreed with. Subsequently, Kampala adopted the common man's chapter¹¹ which prompted Uganda's move to the left, thereby aligning the country more with Tanzania and leaving Kenya in the cold. According to Mittelman (2018), Obote was seen to imitate Nyerere by his approach, but faced a diverse cultural dynamic that affected his success. Unfortunately, until today, the East African community still doesn't have a well-aligned ideology despite sharing colonies and many common views. For instance, during the corona virus pandemic, Tanzania operated an open economy as opposed to other East African economies like Uganda, Kenya and Rwanda.

⁵ Lodompui, J. (2010). TANZANIA'S NATIONAL INTEREST AND THE COLLAPSE OF EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY.

⁶ Global Edge (1999). The East African Community <https://globaledge.msu.edu/trade-blocs/eac/memo>

⁷ New York Times (December, 1976). Ideologies Are Splitting East African Union. <https://www.nytimes.com/1976/12/20/archives/ideologies-are-splitting-east-african-union-east-africans-nearing-a.html>

⁸ Government of Tanzania (1967). Arusha's Declaration and TANU's Policy on Socialism and Self Reliance.

<https://library.fes.de/fulltext/bibliothek/2-tanzania-s0019634.pdf>

⁹ Mittelman, H (2018). Devising an Ideology: The Demonstration Effect of East Africa. https://www.persee.fr/doc/AsPDF/cea_0008-0055_1977_num_17_66_2453.pdf

¹⁰ Eken, S. (1979). Breakup of the East African Community: Problems of regional integration. <https://www.elibrary.imf.org/view/journals/022/0016/004/article-A010-en.xml>

¹¹ Aasland, T., (1974). On the Move to the Left in Uganda. The Commons Man Charter. Research. <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/97132/26.pdf>

This demonstrated how ideology can influence policy and practice. According to Harris (2020)¹², the late President John Magufuli urged citizens to attend churches and mosques, urging that Covid-19 is satanic which still emphasized the importance of aligning ideologically. All in all, can ideology be aligned? Mittleman (2018), argues that ideology evolves with common systems. Although it is doubled edge, new emerging norms, if aligned can spur development and stability.

The re-established EAC now faces more detached ideological orientation. The seven East African nations bring in more diversity and complexity. This is because of the historical colonization of British (Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and South Sudan), Belgian (DRC and later Burundi and Rwanda), Germany (Rwanda and Burundi) until its fall at the World War II, and France (part of South Sudan) until the death of King Leopold in 1910¹³. Let alone cultural diversity and ethnic diversity. Thus, strewn political ideology has a strong dent on the political federation if it's not well thought-out and aligned in light of the present dynamics of the 21st century.

¹² Harris, M. (2020). Implications of Tanzania's Bungled Response to Covid-19 <https://www.csis.org/analysis/implications-tanzanias-bungled-response-covid-19>

¹³ Machar, R. T. D, (1995). South Sudan: A History of Political Domination - A Case of Self-Determination. https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Hornet/sd_machar.html#:~:text=Thus%20far%2C%20North%20and%20South,by%20the%20British%20and%20Egyptians.

¹⁴ Reuters (2016). Uganda picks Tanzania for oil pipeline route rather than Kenya.

ii) Economic Interest and National Priorities

What looms large on East African nations are their varying economic interests and national priorities. This is particularly worrying because every country still corners themselves on their individual desires and protect their nationals. We recollect that Tanzania adopted a socialist approach to protect its citizens from the aggressive capitalist Kenyans (Government of Tanzania, 1967) as well as Obote's common man chatter.

The East African nations continue to ignore the charter in practice and impose trade embargoes to protect their national interests. In 2016, Uganda switched its crude pipeline from Kenya to Tanzania despite initial interest from Kenya¹⁴. The change of route was viewed as an economic alignment between Tanzania and Uganda like it was in the 1960s. According to the East African (December, 2021)¹⁵, trade hostility escalated in East Africa as Kenya banned importation of LATO milk from Uganda and maize flour¹⁶. In 2020, Kenya banned sugar importation from Uganda (The East African, December 2021). On other hand, the

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-energy-uganda-idUSKCN0XK0DT>

¹⁵ The East African (December, 2021). Trade dispute: Uganda considers ban on Kenyan produce. <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/business/uganda-considers-banning-kenya-products-3652490>

¹⁶ Cankara, B. & Mulihira, Z., (2021). Kenya Trade Embargo on Uganda's Maize: A Review of Its Implication on Uganda's Economy and East African Community. <https://www.efficacymethodology.org/policy-b/https->

emergence of Covid-19 exposed weak trade ties within the East African Community. Although, cargo continued to move across the border, a significant delay was recorded stemming from uncoordinated responses and high demand for paper work (WHO, 2020; IFPRI, 2020)^{17 18}

According to the East African¹⁹, East Africa lost \$3.36 billion due to covid-19 trade embargo, which saw regional investment shrink by 46.29 per cent. Mugisha²⁰, argues that intra-trade between the EAC fell by 31.4 per cent even before the emergence of Covid-19 due to already existing NTBs within the member states and importation from Asian countries. For instance, in 2014, Uganda adopted the buy Uganda build Uganda Policy (BUBU) which was intended to increase consumption of locally produced goods²¹ thereby tilting the market against regional intra-trade.

statics123-cdncom-uploads-4416013-normal_6056cce8a6a41pdf

¹⁷ WHO (2020). CROSS-BORDER MANAGEMENT OF COVID-19 OUTBREAK IN EAST & SOUTHERN AFRICA
https://www.afro.who.int/sites/default/files/Covid-19/Technical%20documents/CROSS-BORDER%20MANAGEMENT%20OF%20COVID-19%20OUTBREAK%20IN%20EAST%20%26%20SOUTHERN%20AFRICA_0.pdf

¹⁸ IFPRI (2020). COVID-19 border policies create problems for African trade and economic pain for communities. <https://www.ifpri.org/blog/covid-19-border-policies-create-problems-african-trade-and-economic-pain-communities>

iii) Security and Geopolitics

It's common knowledge that the first EAC went into limbo because of the insecurity, geopolitics and mistrust amongst the member states and their leaders at the time. For instance, the coup by Idi Amin in 1971 that created very hostile rapport among the partners states, which prompted Nyerere to deny meeting Amin and instead offered asylum for Obote (Asteris & Kalantzakos, 2019). The mistrust between the heads of states later turned out to be detrimental to the survival of the East African Community.

In 2018, Uganda and Rwanda closed their boarders until recently, when it was opened. According to the BBC (March, 2019)²², both countries had accused each other of security interference and meddling into each other's affairs. The occurrence was contextually similar to what occurred between Uganda and Tanzania in the 1970s. Additionally, Kenya has severally issued trade embargoes on goods from Uganda²³. To date, the sharky political grounds in South Sudan, the

¹⁹ The East African (January, 2022). East African Losses Billions Due to Covid-19 Measures. <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/business/eac-losses-3b-to-covid-19-measures-as-trade-declines-3687078>

²⁰ Mugisha (2019). Why intra-EAC trade is dwindling.

²¹ MINISTRY OF TRADE, INDUSTRY AND COOPERATIVES (2014). BUY UGANDA BUILD UGANDA POLICY. <file:///C:/Users/JOHNNY/Downloads/BUBU.pdf>

²² BBC (March, 2019). How the Rwanda-Uganda border crossing came to a halt. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-47495476>

²³ Cankara, B & Mulihira, Z. (2021). Kenya's Trade Embargo

instability in Eastern DRC, the unknown shape of the looming political transition in Uganda and Rwanda, and the ethical and identity politics in Kenya²⁴ places the EAC bloc in a very peculiar position that warrant critical security approach. In the past, Uganda has been posing as the security big boy of the region. Since 2014, it has been sending troops to Somalia and to other regional countries. However, that has been viewed as unwarranted dominance by other member states inflicting trust among leaders.

3.0 Policy Recommendations

- i. East African countries ought to find its true north. Without an identity, the bloc will continue to move in cycles without a sustainable and long-lasting future. Most of the successful regional blocs became stable and successful because of certain ideals that they shared and made it a point to stick to it. Therefore, an ideological alignment is critical for the East African Community's success in the long term.
- ii. Kato²⁵ posits that the East African Community (EAC) has achieved full economic integration on paper but the mismatch in policies and practice continue to stifle its growth. The seven East African nations have varying national priorities and it is imperative that those goals are harmonized through a well-coordinated policy response both in practice and implementation for economic stability. The common

denominators are; unemployment, corruption, inequality, inflation, capital market imbalance, poverty, infrastructures, climate change and regional low aggregate demands. The fore-mentioned national priorities ought to be well aligned within a clear policy framework. For instance, can the East African community reflect on adopting East African Development Plan as opposed to respective National Development Plan?

- iii. The security question requires strategic security alignment and approach for regional stability and the progress of the EAC. The admission of the DRC widens the geographical scope and poses more risk to security within the EAC. Therefore, for the EAC to attain political federation, there is need for a clear realignment of the political transition, develop minimum political consensus on a shared meaning of democracy and a unified equal approach to insecurity is critical for the success of the seven East African nations.

In conclusion, as Efficacy Methodology we welcome the Democratic Republic of Congo in joining the EAC and we call for a more coordinated response in terms of policies and practices. It is inescapable that the bloc aligns its ideology, economic interests and security questions for a sustainable regional integration and political federation.

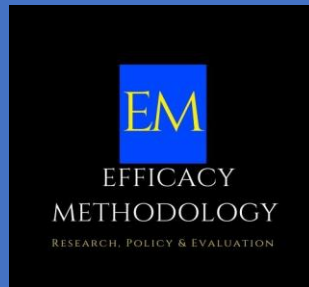
²⁴ Shilaho, K. W., (2018). Political Power and Tribalism in Kenya

²⁵ Kato, R. (2020). Policy Mismatch Stifles East Africa Trade.

<https://www.africanews.com/2022/01/20/covid-19-policy-mismatch-stifles-east-africa-trade-business-africa/>

4.0 About Efficacy Methodology

Efficacy Methodology (EM) is Africa's leading independent nonprofit public policy think tank. Our focus is on Research, Policy and Evaluation. We are strategically working towards establishing collaborative administrative secretariats in Nigeria, South Africa, Ethiopia, Ghana, Botswana and Angola.



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