

## The East African Community- Integration Challenges and Constraints

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### Abstract

### Original Research Article

Regional economic integration processes have been part and parcel of post-colonial Africa. Partner States have taken this as a strategy to overcome polarization, marginalisation and fragmentation. It has served as a way to improve the continent's position in the present-day global economic order. This paper seeks to examine the challenges and constraints facing the east African community in its bid to achieve a full economic integration state. The paper limits itself to the five member states that form the east Africa community, contextual scope will only deal with literature on the east Africa community. The paper adopted a qualitative approach by analyzing available literature to arrive at a logical conclusion. The paper found out the following challenges facing east Africa economic integration; reluctance of member States to Cede Sovereignty, economic and development disparities, lack of political will from member states, un-harmonized trade and economic policies, overlapping membership to regional economic and cooperation blocs, transport, communication and technological challenges, human security issue in the East African region-poverty & HIV/AIDS pandemic, food insecurity and climate change effects, threat of globalization and Marginalisation in international markets, and finally threat of counterfeit products. The research concludes that for east Africa community to reach its full economic integration, leaders should work together and iron their differences amicably for the betterment of the regional economic block.

**Keywords:** Economic Integration, East Africa Community, Challenges and Constraints

## INTRODUCTION

Whilst there are many challenges to regional integration initiatives in the world, this study will highlight the political, social and economic challenges facing the EAC integration process. This is done while keeping in mind that the previous attempt to economically integrate the East African region through the defunct EAC failed. In post-colonial Africa, many regional economic integration initiatives have been forged to unite the continent to pursue economic development but these initiatives have more often failed to deliver meaningful results. It is important to note that the concept of regional cooperation and integration was high on the agenda for many Pan-Africanist leaders and socio-economic policy makers at the dawn of the independence period in the 1950s. Regional economic cooperation and integration emerged as a concept adopted by countries after the Cold War period and later became one of the development strategies for many developing countries. There is no doubt, however, that Africa's initiative towards regional cooperation and integration has faced many challenges and constraints that need to be addressed in order that the process succeeds to

benefit its population.

There is need, therefore, to highlight some of the challenges and obstacles that regional groupings in Africa are facing that have derailed efforts to attain socio-economic and industrial development through regional integration. Many African countries are faced with poor economic growth that has severely affected development in the continent and many scholars, policy makers and economists have supported the potential of regional economic integration and cooperation as the key element that can unlock the developmental challenges that continue to plague the continent and especially now in the advent of the globalization. There is a general consensus that regionalism can steer African countries to achieve increased developmental growth as countries are able to break out of their narrow national markets to form large, single and strong regional markets that enjoy economies of scale as well as obtain a greater bargaining power to access global markets as a bloc. Asante argues that the process of economic integration in Africa will settle the balance of payment deficit, overcoming difficulties arising from the size of national markets, raising productivity and efficient use of regional resources, and also serving as a strong

stimulus for the incorporation of technical progress and many other objectives in international policy (Asante, 1997). It is however clear that regional integration initiative has not succeeded as the key strategy to Africa's development, thus it is crucial to understand the challenges so as to know how best to address them so that the Sub-Saharan African countries can benefit from the process. The many expectations placed on the ability of regional integration to deliver Africa from its many socio-economic and development challenges have not been realised to say the least, but regional economic integration is still deemed a vital and integral part of Africa's development. Many researchers are quite optimistic that regional integration can deliver Africa from its socio-economic and development challenges and that the initiative remains a possible strategy to be pursued to ensure meaningful and sustainable development in the continent. In this regard, it can be said, therefore, that there is hope that Africa's development agenda can be better realized through regional economic cooperation and integration.

## 1.2 Methodology and Research Design

This study attempts to provide a detailed assessment of achievements and challenges of the EAC since 2001. It is research based on secondary sources. The research study examines relevant empirical studies, essays, theses, reports, books and journals found at the University of Cape Town and Ministry of East African Community in Kenya based mainly on literature review and other evidenced-based works on regionalism, regional economic integration and the EAC

## 1.3 Limitations and Scope of the Study

This study is limited to the study of the East African Community's (EAC) achievements and challenges since its revival in 2001. It explores the concept of regional economic integration and its practicability in developing countries as exemplified by the EAC's second attempt to achieve its integration objectives and how the regional bloc sets to overcome challenges facing it. It is research based on secondary sources, however, the study cannot be used to generalize since different regions are experiencing unique problems in their quest to integrate. The study found out that

## 1.4 EAC Regional Integration Challenges

The formation of the EAC is considered an important step in the right direction for the integration of the East African region. The five member states have entered into the integration process well aware of the challenges that initially led to the collapse of the former EAC and are determined to navigate the challenges so as

to safeguard against another collapse of the regional Community. The EAC is a steadfastly growing integration body and in the process problems have been faced by the partner states. The challenges that the EAC faces are principally to do with the process of implementing the goals and objectives in the Treaty for the establishment of the EAC that hinder the regional bloc from effective and efficient pursuit of its integration objectives that is hoped to ultimately result in a united East Africa.

### 1.4.1 Reluctance of Member States to Cede Sovereignty

It has been argued that most countries engaged in a regional integration initiative are not willing to cede any level of sovereignty to a supranational body thus some of the challenges faced by the EAC are issues relating to sovereignty. There exists some form of reluctance by member states to cede their sovereignty. Some EAC countries still value their national sovereignty, pursue different individual state ideologies and are quite protective of their national interests. Despite the efforts put by the EAC in its regional integration initiatives, some countries still view it as a phenomenon that will wipe out national interests and boundaries thus more often there is slow implementation of integration policies at the national level.

This divergent pursuit of different national ideologies, economic, political and developmental interests by member states threatens the achievement of faster integration and the unity of EAC. The regional integration bloc will thus lack the momentum it requires in order for it to pursue meaningful and the desired developmental initiatives. Anyang' Nyon'go points out in his article "Regional Integration in Africa: An Unfinished Agenda" that it has been argued that there should be attractive alternatives to national options for development; and short-term payoffs for parties to the project (Nyong'o, 2001). This will therefore act as an incentive for countries to be active in the integration body. A Kenyan EAC minister serving in the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) cited recently that, the biggest challenge facing the bloc is that member state countries act nationally but seek regional benefits (Asante, 1997). This clearly shows that EAC countries are still holding on to their individual national sovereignty without much intent to display regional cohesiveness.

Beatrice Kiraso, an official of the EAC stated that the bureaucratic system employed by the EAC in relaying and implementing decisions at the EAC secretariat is tedious and cumbersome because EAC partner states tend to stick to issues of sovereignty ([www.nation.co.ke](http://www.nation.co.ke)). She further clarifies that the situation makes it difficult for the implementation of EAC resolutions since there is no mechanism to compel member states to implement EAC decision. It can be argued, therefore, that a political

solution is inevitable thus the need to speed up the formation of political federation. Regional economic integration can take form if member state countries show willingness to cede some level of sovereignty.

The EAC has thus far commissioned studies for purposes of continuous sensitization of different levels of stakeholders in the integration process in the region. Through this, the EAC aims to popularize the current on-going processes to integrate the region for purposes of sensitization, mobilizing support for and collecting people's views on integration with the aim of discouraging any suspicion and negative views of the integration initiative. 146 Tanzanians have apparently been the hardest to convince that the EAC integration provides opportunities for increased profits from a bigger market and the benefits of a borderless market.

The said EAC member state fears that it will be turned into a market for Kenyan goods, but the situation is changing as they are gradually albeit slowly embracing the integration process. There is need to sensitise the East African population and especially communities along the borders so that they fully understand the importance of the EAC integration and regularise their operations in tandem with the EAC protocols. The East African people should embrace the integration process since it is a catalyst to mobile regional resources for regional development initiatives that would bring immense gains to all partner states.

#### 1.4.2 Economic and Development Disparities

The five nation states of the EAC possess some economic and development disparities that threaten the attainment of socio-economic development through regional economic integration initiatives. There is need to ensure firstly that the integration process does not exacerbate any existing economic imbalances among the partner states (EAC, 2007) a reason which led to the collapse of the former EAC in 1977. Further, there was the perception of disproportionate sharing of integration benefits accruing from the regional market and there was lack of a formula to deal with the problem.

Presently, the EAC member states that form the East African economic body do not have the same level of political, social and economic development. This has resulted in suspicion at the expense of cooperation and unity. Countries with small economies like Tanzania, Burundi and southern Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo, and even Rwanda feel threatened and view more developed countries in the integration bloc like Kenya and Uganda as playing hegemonic positions and accruing integration benefits to their side at the expense of their rather small and weak economies. Weak and poor countries feel threatened by existing economic imbalances among member states of a regional integration body

viewing more economically powerful countries as taking advantage of their weak economies and dominating their markets.

This should, however, not be an impediment as there are more tangible benefits when countries act as an economic bloc rather than acting as single, small national units that may not be able to achieve much on their own because they lack the economic strength. If the newly revived EAC has to realise its integration objectives and its gains made tenable, member states must devise a mechanism to address the problem. There are other economic constraints that have hindered the successful implementation of the EAC treaty; among these are capacity and resource constraints that have crippled capacity development.

There is a great deal of fear of competition among the EAC countries. Some member states still believe that Kenya will gain more economically from the EAC but it is important for partner states to overcome the negative perception and work towards strengthening the regional bloc that will eventually lead to greater gains for all partner states. It is said that the slow pace of progress in regional integration process in East Africa that would otherwise be fast tracked is blamed on fears that faster economic integration could benefit some states at the expense of others ([www.statandardmedia.co.ke](http://www.statandardmedia.co.ke)).

#### 1.4.3 Lack of Political Will from Member States

It has been argued that the ability of regional integration in Africa to serve as a solution to socio-economic and development challenges facing the continent lies in the political leadership willingness and commitment to the integration process and the pursuit of its objectives. In Africa, political leadership more often lacks focus. This situation has threatened to undermine the success of regional integration initiatives in many parts of the African continent. Most African regional groupings have been politicised and turned into political outfits pursuing individual country's political interests instead of socio-economic and development initiatives that benefits the regional grouping at large.

One of the reasons the initial EAC that brought together Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda collapsed, and which the now five partner states must navigate with caution, is the different political ideologies each of the three member states practiced at the time. Socialism, Capitalism and dictatorial tendencies topped the list of issues that the first EAC faced in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s ([www.standardmedia.co.ke](http://www.standardmedia.co.ke)). Lack of political will from member state countries presents a challenge to the success of the regional economic integration process in the East African region as some member states fail to timely implement policies or ratify agreed protocols in a timely framework.

This eventually slows down the integration process and

delays achievement of the integration goals. Political will from member state governments is necessary for effective implementation of integration policies and programmes. However, many member countries are not unwilling to bear the implementation cost and in the case where there is political will; constraints can result from institutional weaknesses and lack of capacity. In order for any form of regional cooperation and integration to be successful, stability must exist in both areas. The pursuit of regional integration objectives should have the effect of enhancing both socio-economic and political convergence without which not much may be realised of the regional integration initiatives.

Political instability at national level from member states affects the running of the integration process. This became most evident, for example, by the post-election violence in 2007-08 in Kenya that affected peace and stability in the region. Internally displaced people from the Kenyan political violence went as far as settling in Uganda ([www.econstor.eu](http://www.econstor.eu)). This situation may have some implications in the integration process of the region as Kenya, considered a main player, still reels with consolidating its unity as a country. The recent Burundi elections which were marred by irregularities as well as the lack of democratic space in Rwanda remain thorny issues for the EAC countries. Uganda's long history with rebel forces fighting the government remains an issue that might derail the promotion of territorial cohesion of the East African states as these pursue their regional economic goals and objectives ([www.debatingeastafrika.org](http://www.debatingeastafrika.org)).

A most recent issue of conflict is the on-going fight and dispute over the ownership of Mgingo Islands located on L.Victoria by Kenyan and Ugandan governments ([www.debatingeastafrika.org](http://www.debatingeastafrika.org)). This trend is likely to derail the integration process in the East Africa. Lack of democracy and good governance is an impediment to the success of regional integration in East Africa. This situation is not conducive for any form of integration and pursuit of economic objectives that would otherwise result in development. African countries have a track of fighting wars and conflicts and this has brought with it huge financial burdens to the already struggling poor economies. The EAC member states should overcome the view that they are individual states but embrace the integration process by striving to be unified and avoid any in fighting that may threaten the integration of the East African region.

#### **1.4.4 Un-harmonized Trade and Economic Policies**

Lack of harmonized economic policies amongst member states negatively affects the regional economic integration process resulting in lack of development. In his writing "Regional Integration in Africa: An Unfinished Agenda" P.A. Nyong'o asserts, "It is possible that the

failure of nearly every initiative towards regional integration has been as much the result of flawed conception, defective policy formation and haphazard execution of such policies"(Nyong'o, 2001). In considering this view, there seems to be a lack of practical policies that guide the integration process in the East African region. There is lack of policy coordination and harmonization. The present situation shows that there is no clear-cut and serious development strategy that guides harmonization of economic policies for the East African countries.

In a few cases, where few policies could be clear, the lack of political, technological, economic and financial infrastructure to execute the same becomes a huge impediment to the integration process and formulated policies delay in implementation stage regional integration. On the other hand, not all EAC member states put the same effort to implement policies passed. It is more often the case to see countries unwilling and quite reluctant to implement policies that are not in their immediate national interest (Nyong'o, 1990). Further, there is a need for sound economic policies to be formulated and adopted by member states. EAC should strive for a policy action matrix with a detailed, clear roadmap and time-bound action plans to facilitate implementation and achievement of set policies. The relationship between national and regional policies and strategies should be harmonized.

The flow of trade amongst the EAC member states can be termed as modest but notably it has recorded some growth in the recent years and the implementation of the EAC Customs Union is expected to create room for greater achievements on this front thus the need to harmonize economic policies amongst the member state countries (EAC, 2008). However, disaggregated trade flows reveal that intra-regional trade is characterized by imbalances with a country like Kenya exporting more to the other member states than it is importing. This scenario is, however, expected to change once the Customs Union's policies become fully operational in all the member state countries, thus reducing the trade imbalances. A challenge to regional economic integration in the East African region rests with the commitment of member states to increase intra-regional trade via the creation of Free Trade Areas (FTAs). A Free Trade Area and agreement help to secure Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in order to enhance regional development.

There is still a challenge to free trade in the EAC territory. Border delays and the absence of enforceable means to settle disputes and promote integration is a challenge that is hindering trade between the EAC partner states. In the border points, despite the implementation of the Common Market Protocol to increase trade through free movement of goods, services, capital and people; movement is still fairly restricted across the borders. Citizens complain that



they cannot move freely to the neighbouring states and seek employment, or start a business, while exporters complain of duplicate checks at the border points as well as disparate quality and safety standards in the different states of the regional bloc and many times these non-tariff barriers delay entry of goods ([www.standardmedia.co.ke](http://www.standardmedia.co.ke)). Some partner states have not fully complied with the provisions of the Customs Union protocol which allows for the free movement of goods in the region. There are reported cases whereby some member states still charge taxes and levies of goods traded across inter-regional borders in bid to protect their infant industries and source of revenue.

There seems to be a critical information gap between policy makers, implementers and other stakeholders in the integration process; gaps that can undermine policy implementation and even slow down the speed of the integration process (MEAS, 2012). It has been reported that the business community within the East African region loses more than \$9 million annually due to Non-Tariff Barriers. The cost of doing business in the EAC continues to soar due to the time and financial losses incurred as a result of the imposition of NTBs by some member states. To further complicate the issue, NTBs come in many forms including laws, rules and regulations that have adverse effects on intra-regional trade and in the EAC; it is typically the red tape measures such as safety standards, anti-dumping laws, quotas and import licensing requirements. The other challenge is that work permits have been removed by some member states and while others have not. This calls for a mechanism to be put in place to help monitor and evaluate the application of such barriers that unnecessarily hinder trade between partner states. The stakeholders need to also be sensitised on the importance of adherence to fair trade practices and EAC partner states should focus on consolidating the gains from the implementation of the Customs Union and the Common Market Protocol to ensure that its benefits is enjoyed by all citizens and businesses in the region.

#### **1.4.5 Overlapping Membership to Regional Economic and Cooperation Blocs**

The duplication of membership in regional economic blocs is a common occurrence in the quest for regional integration in Africa and the EAC member states have fallen victim to this trend. The practice is not cost effective since it increases the burden of membership costs to integration blocs for the countries involved (MEAC, 2010). 164 Membership to different regional blocs exposes countries that are already economically and financially weak to financial constraints in maintaining membership in the different regional blocs. In essence this practice contradicts the very aim of pursuing regional integration which is for partner states to pool together regional

resources and unite as a bloc so as to drive the socio-economic agenda of the region. This entrenched practice results in efficiency as it delays integration programmes and projects as well as complicates monitoring of the progress of the integration process. This trend threatens to derail the attainment of integration goals and objectives of the regional bloc. Each of the EAC partner states is a member of at least one or two other regional bodies within and across the region. The irony is that these regional integration blocs have similar goals and objectives leading to duplication and overlapping of integration goals and objectives.

Multiple memberships to regional blocs are problematic to regional integration; currently there is a proliferation of regional groupings especially in the Southern and Eastern parts of Africa that is almost rendering it impossible for regional groupings to run effectively. Tanzania, for example, is a member of EAC and SADC whilst the other four members are partner states of COMESA. Burundi and Rwanda are members of ECCAS while Kenya is a member of IGAD (<http://www.eastafricaresources.org>). This development has caused a major setback in pursuing EAC's strategic and developmental plans in that there are overlapping policies, strategies, rules and regulations from the different regional bodies which a member state country is party to creating a duplication of functions and roles. According to Gibbs (2009), multiple memberships of overlapping Custom Unions with different trade regimes are geographically, economically and politically unsupportable and unsustainable. Furthermore, loyalty to many regional groupings becomes an expensive venture, with time and lack of commitment to a particular bloc being displayed. This common scenario in regional integration in Africa has created many logistical problems such as managing finances, payment of membership fees, divided loyalties and commitment to different regional blocs. This raises the cost of membership to the integration bodies and the result is that many countries suffer financial constraints, and more often are not able to carry out their integration roles and expectations effectively. This definitely affects the strength and unity of the regional economic body in moving towards achieving its integration goals as there is conflict of interests.

The practice of multiple memberships has resulted in an overstretched and divided loyalty in terms of obligation to roles and responsibilities thus affecting efficiency of regional economic bodies. Nnadozie argues that it has been established that an average African country belongs to two or more sub-continental regional integration schemes (Nnadozie, 2003). This is a great dilemma in terms of loyalty and responsibilities. Margaret Lee adds that such overlapping fundamentally undermines regionalism as a result of the inevitable abrogation of rules, regulations, and commitments resulting from the impossible task of

simultaneously fulfilling the obligations of more than one organisation with similar goals and objectives. Lee also cites inefficiency arising from duplication and the overstretching of financial and human resources. Lee argues that the overlapping membership in regional economic organisations is symptomatic of a larger problem, which is the failure of African leaders and their governments to make a political commitment to regionalism. Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi are in EAC and COMESA while Tanzania is in both EAC and SADC.

#### **1.4.6 Transport, Communication and Technological Challenges**

The economic prosperity of the East African region is pegged on the ability of the EAC member states to revamp the dilapidated transport and communications infrastructure of the region so as to hasten transportation of goods, delivery of services and lower the cost of doing business. The present state of the region's transport network is inadequate and unresponsive to the region's investment needs. The primary challenge of the EAC member states since the launch of the Customs Union and the Common Market Protocol is therefore, in revamping the deficient infrastructure in order to increase the economic production capacity of the region and be able to realise meaningful integration benefits. Presently, the East Africa region suffers lack of infrastructure exhibiting poor road networks, poor airport infrastructure, inefficient port facilities, inadequate supply of electricity, and poor telecommunication, poor ICT knowledge transfer among other infrastructural challenges that highly increases business transaction costs, decreases access to markets and affects intra- regional trade (MEAC, 2012). There is also poor communication and technology transfer in the East African region. There is no infrastructure for the modern global communication systems and majority of the East African population have no skills in modern technology. This has become a serious challenge to development as it increases the cost of trade and thus discourages investors. Nnadozie articulates that unless there are appropriate and adequate skills for particular capital or labour intensive economic activity, it is unlikely that foreign or local investors will be attracted and that can only happen if the appropriate skills are available and adequate (Nnadozie, 2003).

In the recent years, the EAC has emphasized the development of regional infrastructure, taking its strategic development plans to higher stages of implementation. The highest priority for EAC since the rebirth of the integration initiative is infrastructure. Major projects in roads, railways, inland waterways, ports and harbours, communications/ICT, energy and civil aviation are being

pursued. Construction works commenced on the Arusha-Namanga-Athi River road in April 2009, a vital section of the East African Road Network that provides linkages through Tanzania and Kenya to Uganda and to Rwanda and Burundi (MEAC, 2010). The ambitious East African Railways Master Plan intended to rehabilitate and revamp the railway system has also been launched. The East African sea ports of Mombasa and Dar es Salam are considered quite strategic trade routes for exports and imports for the region and beyond. The efficiency of the ports operations is however tied to the development of adequate railway, road and telecommunication systems.

The EAC is currently investing more resources in developing infrastructure in the region. EAC is turning focus to projects aimed at simplifying transport and communications in the region. It has developed a six-year master plan to address infrastructural challenges in the region (MEAC, 2009). The thrust would be improving road and rail networks, marine and air transport, minimizing border posts delays and attraction of investment in infrastructure development. The East African Railways Master Plan and East African Road Network Project have projects in the pipeline aiming to bring up and extend comprehensive network of modern rail, roads, inland waterways and telecommunication systems. The systems would effectively connect centers of production and markets throughout the East Africa Community region. The EAC is therefore faced with the challenge of putting in place a robust and reliable infrastructure that would enhance the region's competitiveness. There are also infrastructural projects underway through the Tripartite (EAC-SADC-COMESA) Arrangement aimed at establishing the EAC as a hub to linked transport and communications networks with Northern and Southern Africa trade centres that would vastly contribute to increased intra-EAC and intra-African trade ([www.debatingeastafrica.org](http://www.debatingeastafrica.org)).

Transport and border clearance laws need to be harmonised in order to ensure that there is speedy movement of goods from from one country to another. There are reported cases of unnecessary roadblocks when ferrying goods from Mombasa to Kigali and Burundi. In all the EAC five states, the border posts face a lot of challenges including minimal and inadequate facilities, poor supply of electricity, prolonged delays visible in queues of transit vehicles and citizens awaiting clearance an some locals who are yet to fully understand the benefits of integration are using illegal routes to ferry goods across borders thus denying the government some revenue ([www.infrastructure.eac.int](http://www.infrastructure.eac.int)). The EAC is moving fast to address this issue through recently launched concept of One-Stop-Border-Post (OSBP) in all key border points of the EAC. This strategy involves government agencies

operating at both sides of the borders jointly undertaking the necessary clearance of cargo and passengers. This is a positive step that will definitely ease movement of goods and people and will facilitate trade in the region and although it is not yet in place, the EAC is seeking ways to fast track its implementation.

#### **1.4.7 Human Security Issue in the East African Region**

Human security is an issue that can be a huge impediment to achievement of regional integration goals since meaningful integration can only thrive in a peaceful and politically stable environment. The EAC countries just like many African countries struggle with a wide range of issues of human security that have plagued the continent for many decades. Many political conflicts and military coups in the world today occur in the African continent and this situation has continued to severely disrupt political and socio-economic activities that would otherwise result in meaningful development. There are other natural factors prevalent in Africa that cause threats to human security in the African continent. EAC states have not been spared from dealing with the human security issue which adversely hinders unity and cohesion in the region. The regional integration aims and objectives cannot be pursued adequately without the existence of effective, peaceful, stable, well-governed, and strong states.

##### **1.4.7.1 Poverty & HIV/AIDS Pandemic**

Poverty and disease are rife in East Africa. Poverty has remained a stubborn issue in the socio-economic dynamics of the East African region and the general characteristics of its adverse effects are similar across the five EAC countries. The East African region is riddled with high rates of poverty despite its immense economical potential. East Africa is greatly endowed with vast natural resources with a huge economic potential in arable agriculture, fisheries, tourism, manufacturing industry among others which, however, remain largely untapped even as the majority of its citizens live in abject poverty ([www.eastafricaresources.org](http://www.eastafricaresources.org)). These challenges continue to pose a serious human security threat in the East African region. The fight against HIV/AIDS is causing financial and social constraints to the already poor economies of the partner states. The effect of HIV/AIDS is also quite severe as the most productive and economically viable members of the society easily become victims to the diseases and this causes a deficiency in human resource development needed drive the integration process. There is no regional economic growth and prosperity that EAC Member States can be attained through regional integration while its population suffers from hunger, and disease The EAC integration process may not attain its goals if issues of human security affecting its citizens are not adequately addressed since regional integration is more than just a process to increase trade, and investment so as

to attain industrial and economic development.

##### **1.4.7.2 Food Insecurity and Climate Change Effects**

Issues of climate change and food security are closely related and are intertwined. The East African region is frequently affected by severe droughts and famine resulting in serious issues of food shortages. Regional food shortage remains a challenge for the EAC member states even though partner states, individually and collectively have the capacity to produce enough food for domestic consumption and a surplus for the export market. The negative and adverse effects of climate change such as severe droughts, floods and extreme weather changes are occurring with greater frequency and intensity in the East African region and threatening the livelihoods of the East African population becoming a human security issue. The food shortages are occasioned mainly by two factors; one, limited trade between times and/or places of abundance on the one hand, and those without food on the other; and two, huge variations in food production due to changes in weather patterns which are becoming erratic due to global climate change effects (MEAC,2010).The EAC member states could facilitate the movement of food from surplus areas to deficit regions thus benefit the whole region. Besides aggravating food security in the region, climate change also poses a threat to the drivers of economic growth in the region such as water resources, agriculture, energy, transport, health, forestry, tourism and wildlife, land and infrastructure ([www.eastafricaresource.org](http://www.eastafricaresource.org)). There is need for free flow of agricultural products across borders of member states which would in turn have immense benefits to all, as producers would stand to profit from enlarged markets and consumers will have adequate supply of commodities. In a meeting held by heads of states in Arusha, Tanzania on December, 2010, regional leaders appealed for faster harmonization of East African Community staple food standards to facilitate trade. The meeting adopted a joint food security plan as well as a climate change policy resulting from erratic rainfall in the last few years that have characterised the region ([www.nation.co.ke](http://www.nation.co.ke)). The EAC challenge on food security calls for adopting innovative ways of sustaining food security by member states. The EAC Food Security Action Plan and the EAC Climate Change Policy are action steps that EAC member states recently adopted which will help steer efforts to improve food security and mitigate the effects of climate change in East Africa. Again, the EAC should strive to facilitate the elimination of NTBs that continuously hinder trade in the region to allow the free flow of agricultural produce in the region. This will certainly benefit both producers and consumers in the regional bloc and boost food security in East Africa. Human Security in East Africa especially in the advent of globalisation remains a great concern for member states as

it can drive away potential investors in the region. It is important to look into how regional economic integration strategies can act as a tool to mitigate the challenges. The concept of human security initiated a paradigm shift in international security structure after the 1994 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Report. According to the report, human security encompasses many facets, including “economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political considerations.” A regional approach to the issues of food security and climate change is inevitable for the EAC member states as they share close geographical territories with similar climatic conditions that affect their natural resources, ecosystems and the factors of production (Grant and Soderbaum, 2003). The outcome of the EAC’s strategy to counteract food security and climate change challenges will go a long way in the quest for achievement of food security and rational agricultural production in the region. Political Instability, Peace and Security Issues and proliferation of Small-arms and Light Weapons in The East African region, like the rest of the African continent, is beset with macro-economic instability, largely resulting from economic mismanagement and corruption, marginalization within the world economy, abject poverty, unacceptable levels of unemployment, poor educational and social service facilities, HIV/AIDS pandemic and economic policies imposed by international financial institutions such as the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the powerful western governments ([www.eastafricaresources.org](http://www.eastafricaresources.org)).

In East Africa, there are many forms of conflict that have threatened human security but the recent ascension of Rwanda and Burundi to the EAC has opened avenues for enhancing regional security. Besides Tanzania, most East African countries have or are experiencing some form of conflict either directly or indirectly.

The contagion effect of political conflicts especially in the Horn of Africa threatens personal security amongst the EAC member states. This is exemplified by the existing conflict in the Horn of Africa; the long and persistent political impasse in Somalia conflict and the crisis in South Sudan’s conflict with Northern Sudan have resulted in an influx of refugees and subsequent proliferation of small-arms that has raised the issue of insecurity in the East African region (EAC, 2003). This has given rise to insurgency and terrorist attacks in some EAC member state countries in most recent times. The lack of political stability in the neighbouring Somalia has also given rise to piracy which has led to serious crimes issues such as terrorism, illicit trade, smuggling and drug trafficking along the coastal parts of East Africa. This threatens investment in the region as well as intra-regional trade. It is imperative, then, that EAC has to grapple with the issue of insecurity as it seeks to integrate the region

economically. This precarious situation scares away investors that would otherwise create trade opportunities in the region. The EAC Member States may have to add security as part of their mandate to enhance security in the region.

The Human Security problem in East Africa is clearly not pegged to one country. Human security problems have become a regional issue that requires collective regional responses. The East African regional economic body should initiate approaches to be adopted and embraced as a key to unlocking the region’s development potential as well as used to address the prevalent human security threats ([www.eac.int](http://www.eac.int)). The easy availability of small-arms is fuelling insecurity in East Africa. This situation threatens the integration efforts of Member States. The EAC region is currently facing a number of security challenges that include terrorist attacks, armed robberies, carjacking, cattle rustling and piracy in the Indian Ocean; all of which are fuelled by the proliferation of small-arms and light weapons.

There is a threat to regional security posed by the war ravaged Somalia. The East African sea ports that are strategic to the import and export trade are now vulnerable to heightened piracy which is not only a major trade hindrance for the EAC member states but is also a serious threat to peace and security in the region. Al Qaeda and Al Shabaab terrorist attacks are not new to some EAC members. Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya have become victims of Al Qaeda and Al Shabaab insurgents’ attacks that have led to loss of lives. The attacks are mainly due to the porous borderlines and pose a military challenge to the EAC member states who should team up to boost security in the region and guarantee sustainable economic development of the East African region. Some EAC partner states have had to grapple with issues of lack of democracy and good governance. The instability of a regional member state can affect the functions of the regional body in general. It is, however, encouraging noting that political stability in the East African region has been improving greatly. Most partner states have held peaceful, free and fair elections in recent change of governmental leadership.

It is important that all EAC partner states promote good governance and entrench provisions that promote participation by people at the grassroots in governance issues. The EAC partner states can initiate and implement strategies that promote accountability of leaders towards the East African citizens and that citizens should be made aware that good governance goes beyond holding regular elections. It is, however, encouraging to note that the EAC is keen to tackle issues of insecurity in the region. The most recent move by the Kenya Defence Forces (KDF) to fight



Al Shabab in Somalia which is causing security threats in the country and in the region joins troops from two other EAC member states; Uganda and Burundi who had already joined the effort of restoring political stability and the rule of law in Somalia through African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) ([www.debatingeastfrica.org](http://www.debatingeastfrica.org)). The regional security in East Africa will be compromised if Somalia will not attain peace and stability and this will derail the integration process but EAC partner states are not taking chances but are seriously engaging to restore order in Somalia as they are committed to pursue their integration efforts in a peaceful and stable environment. The success of the regional bloc will be dependent on the events around the larger East African region including the Horn of Africa. In 2006, The EAC Council adopted a Regional Strategy for Peace and Security, with one of the goals being implementation of measures to combat the easy availability and misuse of small-arms and light weapons in the region.

#### **1.4.8 Threat of Globalization and Marginalisation in International Markets**

“There is little doubt that Sub-Saharan Africa has become increasingly marginalized since the end of the Cold War (Stephan *at al.* 2006).” The end of the Cold War presented huge socio-economic challenges for Africa and any attempt by the continent to integrate into the newly established neo-liberal global political economy has resulted in its further marginalisation and economic isolation. Undoubtedly, the neo-liberal agenda advocated by the West coupled with globalisation has had an economically marginalising effect on developing countries. World trade has grown rapidly over the past years and at consistently higher rates than world GDP. It is a fact that the major industrial economies of the world dominate the international trade and markets and Africa is arguably no player in global markets and makes no impact on global relations due to its weak economic standing in world rankings.

The EAC regional economic integration and cooperation initiative can provide a workable solution that can aid East African countries to bring down unfair trade barriers and restrictions, codify as a regional bloc the terms of global competition affecting trade and investments with external partners. As a regional bloc, EAC can administer a unified package of agreements to which all members are committed. The East African regional bloc can advise member states to pursue economic and development policies that are practical. Regional integration may not completely solve Africa’s economic challenges; but it can eliminate some impediments to economic growth and make countries have a greater bargaining power in the international trade arena.

EAC regional economic venture can help East African

countries reposition themselves in the face of globalisation and seek to bring to closure the ever-widening gap of economic isolation and marginalisation that is presently threatening to tear its economic development fabric and throw the region into an acute poor economy thus threatening the security of the continent’s human population.

Lack of openness to foreign trade and foreign direct investment has increased economic inequality among African countries. This factor has resulted in the marginalisation of developing countries of Sub-Saharan Africa in international trade and markets more so in the new wave of globalisation. African countries have continuously suffered from declining incomes and rising poverty levels due to their inability to achieve greater integration in the world market as they remain weak economies fighting powerful economies. The developing economies of Sub-Saharan Africa still primarily depend on the export of a narrow range of primary commodities and often suffer from deteriorating and volatile terms of trade in world markets due to existing trade restrictions and barriers. These barriers are caused by continued protectionism in key world markets. In light of these effects caused by external markets, regional economic integration processes can therefore play a crucial role in counteracting such negative distortions that have threatened to weaken and to some extent even kill local production in developing countries in Africa. The EAC member states can work to spearhead the protection of local markets of member states if they succeed to integrate fully. A regional economic bloc with clear economic policies will facilitate free trade practices according to an agreed set of international rules and regulations that help promote fair and equal trade practices among members. A united and vibrant regional economic integration initiative in the East African region with sound economic and developmental agendas will serve to codify the terms of global competition and help administer a unified package of agreements among member states to which all members are committed. This will raise the ability of the regional bloc to speak in unity as one voice, empower member states to develop a bargaining power to pursue economic interests. This will bring tangible benefits to its population without allowing Western hegemonic free trade practices to impose orders on the international trading system at the cost of developing countries economic interests which in turn adversely affect local markets.

Regional integration initiatives in East Africa will assist in addressing the lack of policy consistency and security for private capital that currently remains one of the main reasons for Africa’s marginalisation in relation to Foreign Direct Investment. Regional economic initiatives can spur meaningful economic growth in the region unlike when an individual country is left to act on its own. Even in cases

where individual countries have put in place adjustment policies and rigorously implement them, most Sub-Saharan African economies have failed to establish a sustained process of accumulation linking investment with savings and exports. More often, it is thus a common scenario to see economic growth in African countries continuing to be at the mercy of world commodity prices and aid flows (African Economic Outlook, 2020).

If regional economic integration initiatives in East Africa are positively embraced and adopted, they can help break another set of constraints that has led to the marginalisation of Sub-Saharan African countries in international trade. Africa's role and participation in international markets is continually being threatened by existing non-tariff barriers such as food safety standards, restrictive preferential trade agreements and other unfair conditions governing present day global economic markets. The emergence of these standards and technical regulations, including the procedures and technical mechanisms for the assessment of their conformity, contributes further to global economic marginalisation of the ill-equipped countries of Sub-Saharan Africa (MEAC, 2003).

These factors can be addressed effectively if the East African countries come up with a strong regional economic bloc and set to effectively advance and protect their own economic interests, thus thwarting efforts of any form of marginalisation or unfair treatment in global trade.

#### **1.4.9 Threat of Counterfeit Products**

The EAC partner states are facing a new challenge in the market. There is a growing trade in counterfeit products in their regional markets. There is evidence of high prevalence of counterfeit products such as electrical and electronic products, motor vehicle spares, cell batteries, household goods, computer programmes and accessories, medicines among others that pose a danger to unsuspecting consumers in addition to threatening genuine and upcoming industries in the region. There is a sharp rise in the sale of the contraband goods within East Africa which is blamed on crafty traders and entrepreneurs, both local and international exploiting the relaxed trade regime in the region brought about by the launch of the Customs Union and the Common Market Protocols. The situation calls for a combined effort by EAC member states to fight the vice and the strengthening of Intellectual Property Policies as well as putting up adequate mechanisms to scrutinise entry points that remain porous and unchecked. The EAC can also establish a regional institution to certify the quality of goods imported into the region and to ensure safety regulations are adhered to (MEAC, 2010).

#### **1.4.10 Conclusions and recommendations**

Africa is undoubtedly faced with serious developmental struggles in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and unlocking these problems remains a topic for debate and discussion

for many scholars and policy makers on African economic development strategies. Many solutions and various approaches to Africa's socio-economic and development challenges have been pursued but it remains to be seen which approach will effectively deliver the African continent from its economic woes. It has proven difficult for Sub-Saharan African countries to play competitively and take a pivotal role in the liberalized world markets and global trade. However, a fact that is almost clear is that there is a huge potential and enormous benefit for the African continent if regional economic integration initiatives and other regional trading organizational efforts are consolidated and empowered to play a role in negotiating unfair terms of trade and address globalization threats while at the same time preventing the marginalisation of African countries in global markets.

It is, however, important to note that the formation of regional economic groupings in Africa is not a new phenomenon; attempts have been made since the post-independence period. African countries therefore don't have to 'reinvent the wheel' but work with full commitment towards the realisation of these initiatives, acknowledging and addressing any obstacles to the formation of strong and effective regional economic groupings with institutional capacities to create large-scale infrastructure that is capable of addressing the present day economic challenges in Africa and bring real economic benefits to the African population.

Regional economic integration in East Africa can stimulate increased economic growth and development and partner states stand a better chance to articulate the region's interests in international trade. The successful integration of the East Africa region is a great opportunity for member states to bring to closure the ever-widening gap of economic marginalisation in global markets and to effectively address the negative effects of globalisation as well as tap into tangible benefits of the integration process. This will translate into an expansion of its industrial base leading to increased socio-economic development in the region. In order to avoid the many challenges faced by the regional economic bloc, member states should strive to back up the integration efforts by putting in place the right legal and institutional frameworks with appropriate economic and political governance mechanisms to boost the process of integration in the East African region.

In conclusion, full regional economic integration in East Africa can be realized if some of the aforementioned challenges and obstacles are effectively addressed so that some actualization of political and socio-economic empowerment in the region can be achieved. There is a huge possibility that the regional economic integration initiative been pursued by EAC partner states will spur economic growth and development if the above challenges are adequately addressed. The new interest in regional

economic integration in the East African region can help mitigate the challenges of underdevelopment and poor

economic growth a situation that is a reality in many parts of the continent.

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