

Pan Africanism and Development: The East African Community Model

by

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Abstract

The EAC (East African Community), created in 2001, is the umbrella organization overseeing a pan-nation trade bloc consisting of Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi. This confederation features a single currency, common language (Kiswahili), and shared regional initiatives (e.g. technology, research, education, and tourism, etc.). This paper discusses the EAC model as an extension of Pan-Africanism, its use as a prototype for economic integration in other African regions, and the reciprocal benefit of mutual cooperation with the African Diaspora. The paper also chronicles and highlights the challenges and the moments of triumph that have brought the EAC to fruition and functionality.

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Introduction

The EAC, i.e. the East African Community, created in June 2001, is the regional intergovernmental organization of the Republics of Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi with its headquarters in Arusha, Tanzania. These five countries (comprising the core of the East Africa region) are working toward the goal of consolidating, by 2013, into a geopolitical confederation, namely, the East African Federation (EAF). Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda were the original constituency members of the EAC with Rwanda and Burundi being accepted as members in November 2006 (Guardian, 2006). An official ceremony and treaty signing for the inclusion of Rwanda and Burundi was held on June 18, 2007 (Cocks, 2007). This consortium, starting with the integration of Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, is actually a revival of the old East African Cooperation which collapsed in 1977, after a 10-year existence. As of June 2007, the pan-nation trade bloc is led at the presidential level by Mwai Kibaki (Kenya), Jakaya Kikwete (Tanzania), Yoweri Museveni (Uganda), Paul Kigame (Rwanda), and Pierre Nkurunziza (Burundi).



East African Regional Integration: British Rule

To understand why the EAC concept had to be re-launched, the circumstances and issues affecting its demise and collapse must be revisited and accessed. In the 1890s, British colonial interest in East Africa (conceived as a region from a territorial perspective) can be traced back to accomplishing three major objectives: 1) securing control of the Nile headwaters as a conduit for protection of British position in Egypt and the Suez Canal, 2) monitoring of pre-World War I era German imperial plans in the region, and 3) opening up the Kenyan hinterland via rail transport to introduce lucrative large-scale farming. At this time, the East African region, colonized under British control, was comprised of Tanganyika (i.e. mainland Tanzania), Kenya, Uganda, and Zanzibar (an island off the coast of Tanganyika). In 1948, Britain set up the East African High Commission (EAHC), which oversaw a variety of common service initiatives for the region that is currently comprised of Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda; e.g. regional university (namely, the University of East Africa), railways, harbors, airways, unions (postal and customs), and departments (telegraph and meteorology), etc.

The East African Common Services Organization (EACSO) was established in 1961 to replace the EAHC, which was deemed politically unacceptable, following that Tanganyika had attained independence from Britain in the same year. It was to manage many of the integration services of the region in the mode of the predecessor organization, EAHC.

With Zanzibar and Kenya in 1963 and Uganda in 1962 becoming independent from Britain, the presidential leadership of the newly independent countries (Julius Nyerere –Tanzania (formed from 1964 geo-political merger of Tanganyika and Zanzibar), Jomo Kenyatta - Kenya, and Milton Obote - Uganda) thought that political and economic prudence called for engaging in the continuance of the common services initiatives, but under African direction and customization (Kamanga, 2004).

The 1967 Treaty

In 1967, the Treaty for East African Cooperation (aka the 1967 Treaty, for short) was signed; thusly, the East African Cooperation was born. It, taking over nearly the entire range of joint services institutions belonging to the former EACSO, was comprised of six major administrative organs: 1) East African Authority, 2) Committee of East African Ministers, 3) Secretariat, 4) East African Legislative Assembly, 5) Ministerial Councils (five), and 6) East African Developmental Bank. Its service categories can be delineated into two groupings: East African Communities Corporation (EACC) and General Fund Services (GFS). The EACC provided services such as railways, telecommunications, and airways while the GFS oversaw budgetary management, auditing, training, and research issues and expenditures. The organization was headquartered (by consensus) in Arusha (Tanzania), a metropolitan hub geographically centered amongst the tri-state capitals/governmental seats of Kampala (Uganda), Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) and Nairobi (Kenya). During the era of British occupation of East Africa, the industrial and economic center of the territory was Nairobi, which was quickly becoming a hub of White settlement. Kenya, in comparison to the other East African component territories, was seen by Britain as the most desirable development area for European emigration based upon abundant natural resources, ideal climate, rich soil/farmland, all in one package. The economic marginalization of Tanzania, Zanzibar, Uganda, and rural areas of Kenya outside Nairobi (i.e. the Black areas) exacerbated inter-territorial trade imbalances, product marketing difficulties, and economic decay leading to friction and bitter complaints from the African citizenry toward British authorities. At the time of independence from Britain, Kenya, by default of events occurring during the colonial experience, was the most developed of the East African countries from an economic, industrial, and infrastructure point of view. The decision to place the administration of the East African Cooperation in a location other than Nairobi (and out of Kenya) was envisioned as a correction to the British model and as a move to quell potential anti-Nairobi/Kenya animosity from other member states stemming from colonial era sentiments. Additionally, these administrative micro-units and adjustments, ultimately designed to efficiently carry out the organ functions of the East African Cooperation, were established and distributed throughout the member states; this move was seen as necessary to promote the importance of all regions within / toward integration efforts (Kamanga, 2004).

Demise of the East African Cooperation

In summary, the East African Cooperation (1967-1977) crumbled from the administrative failure of its leadership to resolve the collective impact of six major, on-going issues: 1) lack of political will, 2) insufficient information distribution and confederation concept buy-in amongst tri-state rank & file citizenry, 3) inequitable fiscal redistribution of gains, 4) inter-territorial imbalances in trade, 5) currency system disharmony, and 6) constitutional impediments. Unresolved issues one through five are self-explanatory; however, constitutional impediments will be explored further from a political, financial, and institutional standpoint. Following divergent paths being taken by member states in terms of political architecture, social laws, and civil liberties, Idi Amin Dada's 1971 seizure of power in Uganda by the overthrow of the Obote regime exacerbated regional tensions and strained political communication amongst the tri-partner governments. Adding fuel to fire, President Amin's egomaniacal personality, bullying, confrontational theatrics, and open assertion that power in East Africa revolved around him created a hostile political climate for meetings of the East African Authority - the main body that helped keep the territorial administrative structure operational; as a result, the East African Authority ceased meetings and operation in 1971. On the financial end, sentiments of economic nationalism gave way to each of the partner states effectively withdrawing from a common currency and developing separate state currencies and central banks. This withdrawal from the common market approach created a decline in intra-East Africa trade levels, imbalances in inter-state remittance, and loss of foreign private investment over perceptions/concerns about economic instability. On the institutional front, micro-management of East African Cooperation business and affairs by officials from member state governments took place because different administrative committees took too long for decisions to be reached and many issues were thereby left dangling and unresolved, leading to organizational chaos and confusion. The demise of the 10-year old organization was culminated in June 1977 when the partner states withheld approval for the general fund services budget for the year beginning July 1, 1977. As previously mentioned, the service budget provided itemized financial allocations for training, auditing, management and research matter expenditures.

The re-launch of the integration idea and initiative under the new name of the East African Community (EAC) in 2001 was predeceased by a series of forward-moving political highlights occurring after the East African Cooperation collapse in June 1977. The event highlights are:

1977 - (September) East African Finance Ministers sign a memorandum of Understanding in Washington, D.C., pledging to seek a solution with the aid of a mutually accepted mediator.

1978 - (December) The EAC Headquarters in Arusha cease to function. Dr. Victor H. Umbricht, a Swiss diplomat, is accepted as the Mediator.

1984 - Mediation Agreement (Agreement for the Division of Assets and Liabilities of the former East African Cooperation) is signed in Arusha by Nyerere, Moi and Obote. Article 14 commits them to “explore and identify further areas for future cooperation”.

1993 - Agreement for the Establishment of the Permanent Tripartite Commission (PTC) is adopted.

1996 - Secretariat of the PTC is launched.

1997 - Decision taken to upgrade into a Treaty the Agreement for the establishment of a PTC.

1999 - The Treaty Establishing the East African Community (TEAC), nicknamed the ‘3-M Treaty’ (coinciding with the first letters of the Presidents’ surnames), is signed by Benjamin Mkapa (Tanzania), Daniel arap Moi (Kenya) and Yoweri Museveni (Uganda) in Arusha.

2000 - Having been duly ratified by Partner States, the Treaty acquires the force of law.

Since 1977, many voices had called for a revival of the regional confederation concept, with multiple start-up efforts being attempted (as listed above) (Kamanga, 2004).

Birth of the East African Community

Having taken steps to avoid repeating the old mistakes, the EAC, born in 2001, encourages regional resource pooling and regional free trade; this new trade bloc (703,842 sq. mi.) represents a practical, modern-era application of *ujima* (Kiswahili for *collective work*). With the acceptance of new members Rwanda and Burundi, the bloc's population and territorial space increases from 90 million to around 115 million people with an additional land annexation of 681,980 sq. mi. as a consequence (Business in Africa, 2006). In this age where the challenges of globalization necessitate greater cooperation between countries to enhance socioeconomic development, the EAC initiative and concept is expected to boost the political and economic clout of the region – a territory which is also rich in various natural resources (e.g. forests, minerals, exotic wildlife, and water (just to name a few)). The main purpose of establishing the EAC is to strengthen regional cooperation, infrastructure and development via full political, economic and cultural integration of the member states. Some of the areas of cooperation include commerce, technology, health, environmental concerns, and tourism. The EAC also cooperates in political matters including defense, security, foreign affairs and judicial matters. Under the auspices of the EAC, the pan-nation region will feature a common currency, a common legislative assembly, a common language, and shared initiatives on research, regional transportation and resource usage (Africa Business Pages, 2003).

By 2013, the EAC plans to have facilitated the creation of the East African Federation which will be a federal super state where all member countries will keep their own identities with national parliaments, presidents, and flags, but share a federal parliament & cabinet, a chief justice, a supreme court, and a super state president appointed by rotation from the member states (Peterson, 2005; Kasasira, 2007). As part of strategies and efforts to improve upon the limitations of the East African Cooperation developed under the 1967 Treaty, the EAC has gone to great lengths to promote its aims and policies as people-centered and to strengthen its infrastructure through developing administration, policy, management and organization structure for incorporating all major economic integration systems: Customs Union, Common Market, Monetary Union, and Political Federation; additionally, much attention and sensitivity (from a policy perspective) has been given topical issues such as the environment, gender, good governance (inclusive of rule of law, democracy, human rights, and social justice), and civil society (Kamanga, 2004).

In contrast to the functioning of the East African Cooperation, the EAC is also using Kiswahili in facilitating the fruition of the EAF from the vantage point that it sees a common language, over time, as tending to create loyalty, assimilation and cooperation among diverse groups (Mulokozi, 2002). For example, Kiswahili has proven useful as a peacekeeping tool in minimizing post Genocide Era (i.e. after 1994) flare-ups/conflicts between Tutsis and Hutus across both Rwanda and Burundi. In promoting Kiswahili, the EAC encourages its use as the regional common language for a variety of reasons: a) widely understood, b) ethnically neutral, c) relatively small learning curve needed for mastery, d) related to other Bantu languages in syntax structure and vocabulary, e) Pan-African appeal, and f) akin to a resource language. Having at least 120 million speakers, it is not only spoken extensively in the EAC countries and Congo but also with increasing significance in parts of the Horn of Africa, Malawi, Zambia, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, South Africa and the Indian Ocean Islands (i.e. Mauritius, Seychelles, and Comoros Islands).

In the 1960s and 1970s, Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere (aka “Mwalimu” – *teacher* in Kiswahili) advocated that Kiswahili should be adopted and promoted as a common language for Africa, particularly in East Africa, and as the national language for Tanzania. Tanzania, through outreach and invitation from Nyerere in the 1960s and 70s, became a haven for freedom fighter resettlement and associated military training from various anti-colonialist groups (e.g. Black Panthers; ANC; SNCC; PAC; ZAPU; Republic of New Afrika; etc.), thusly maintaining its image as a symbol of Pan-Africanism (i.e. the ideology promoting African/Black cooperation irrespective of ethnicity or geographical residence) in other parts of Africa and in the Diaspora. Because of the efforts, visions, and views of Julius Nyerere and many Pan-Africanists in the Diaspora (e.g. sociologist/Kwanzaa founder Maulana Karenga; scholar/Afrocentric theorist Molefi Kete Asante), East Africa has garnered some appeal across the African Diaspora, particularly in the U.S., from a cultural linkage perspective.

In light of this, the U.S. Africa Diaspora (comprised of indigenous African-Americans and immigrant peoples from Caribbean and African nations) with a formidable cadre of intellectuals, skilled professionals and a combined annual purchase power exceeding \$762 billion (2006 figures) should collectively form economic organizations and political lobby groups to facilitate use of their resources (money, intellect, technology skills, human capital) in assisting the EAC's multi-faceted development (and by extension, Africa's) and to broker future U.S.-EAC trade deals and relations (Ngambi & Katembo, 2006).

In general, as the business interests of international companies, America, the EU, and Asia (particularly China) increasingly become directed at partnering with African nations for trade, raw materials (oil, diamonds, coltan, titanium, etc.) and commercial ventures, African-Americans should position themselves (within an organizational scheme) as natural liaisons to broker Africa-U.S. business initiatives, e.g. a) 25% of the US's crude oil imports is predicted to come from Nigeria in the next 5-10 years; b) cell phone giant Ericsson started pilot programs (2007) in various East & West African nations to supply money and infrastructure in harnessing seed oil from *Jatropha* plants and pumpkins as Diesel fuel alternatives to power cellular network stations; c) Delta Airlines has become the first U.S. carrier to offer direct flights to Africa, e.g. Ghana, Nigeria (in 2008), Kenya (in 2008), South Africa and d) Microsoft (Dec. 2005) officially launched its Kiswahili software products across East & Central Africa.

As a focus initiative, the U.S.'s African Diaspora must establish relationships with African diplomats and corporate executives who reside in the U.S. on government/national business. It must function as a resource in creating ties and linkages to Africa's nations, international markets, and business sectors; this, in turn, benefits both African-Americans and African nations from an economic and geo-political leverage perspective. With the exception of African Americans, America's non-White and immigrant populations (i.e. Caribbean/African (to a small degree), Asians, Hispanics, ethnic Europeans, Jews, Arabs, etc.) use/develop economic, investment and political ties to their homeland countries/continents to facilitate reciprocal, multi-pronged group leverage within the U.S., i.e. to get their cut of the 'American pie'. Slavery's aftereffects have had much to do with Black disconnect from Africa. In application, (as one progressive idea and strategy) African-Americans can use HBCUs as major conduits to facilitate U.S.-Africa business and cultural linkages.

The “nappy-headed ho” comment (2007) directed at the Rutgers women’s basketball team by radio talk show host Don Imus may have been handled and perceived as an international insult to Africa’s nations from the United States if African-Americans were politically and economically connected to their ancestral homeland. In other words, Don Imus’ comments would have probably forced U.S. President George W. Bush to apologize on behalf of America to African countries & the Diaspora since the incident would have damaged trade relations w/ African countries in the context that the Imus comments would have been perceived to be not just directed at the Black women on the Rutgers basketball team but Africans everywhere. By extension, solidarity and Pan-African linkage increase economic and political leverage for Africans everywhere.

Final Analysis: The EAC as a Prototype African Regional Integration Model

In Colonial East Africa, Germany (then Belgium) colonized Rwanda and Burundi under the banner of German and French, respectively, while Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda (the original EAC-constituency countries) were colonized by Britain under the banner of English; therefore the success of the EAC’s goals represents African cooperation across colonial language zones and boundary lines. The EAC model promotes Pan-Africanism, technology and socioeconomic development – all of which are concepts and initiatives discouraged by or under colonialism. It, by default, facilitates the reversal of the impact and effects of the colonial system and experience which were designed to expropriate Africa’s natural resources (e.g. gold, rubber, coltan, titanium, diamonds, timber, etc.) for European profit/benefit and to simultaneously create disunity, racism and inter-ethnic hatred amongst indigenous peoples for control purposes via foreign-imposed literature, theology, and social policy. The African Union (AU) is an organization consisting of fifty-three African nations; interestingly, Africa contains 54 nations, though Morocco, the lone hold-out, has declined membership in the AU over its 1984 OAU withdrawal and political protest because of the disputed Sahara Republic’s admission and entry as the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic. Established in 2001 like the EAC, it was formed as a successor and re-launch of the Organization of African Unity (OAU). Eventually, the AU aims to have a single currency and a single integrated defense force, as well as other institutions of state, including a cabinet for the AU Head of State. The purpose of the union is to help secure Africa’s democracy, human rights, and a sustainable economy, especially by bringing an end to intra-African conflict and creating an effective common market (African Union, 2007).

The AU can promote the EAC as a model that can be explored for customized reduplication to fit the needs of other African regions in optimizing economic development, resource management and good governance (BBC News, 2002). At present, the AU has six regions: North African, West African, East African (a larger conglomerate of countries than the five-member EAC), Central African, Southern African, and Diaspora (Panapress, 2006; Foote, 2004). In terms of structure, perhaps each of the five continental regions will constitute an economic bloc with the EAC serving as a prototype; essentially, the AU, in this scenario, would be an administrative and policy superstructure overseeing five economic blocs carved along geo-political boundary lines.

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