

The role kenyas strategic national interests politics essay



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African regional integrations have always been informed by what each country will gain as a result of integrating with others. This therefore means that each country positions itself in such a way that it will always benefit from any form of cooperation. The jealousy occasioned by the political leaders to preserve the sovereignty of their countries means that full integration takes long to be realized. Each country in pursuit of its national interests directly or indirectly impedes or hastens full integration. This research paper aims to analyze the strategic national interests that occasion regional integration in Africa with a focus on Kenya in the EAC. It will critically analyze the EAC treaty, protocols and the levels that national interests of Kenya have impeded full implementation. It will also make a comparison of the strategies used in the wider African Union in so far as national interests are used so as to advance a country's agenda. The study seeks to use purposive sampling in its research methodology to select those to be interviewed for this paper. Towards this the research seeks to tests the hypotheses that hegemony sought by Kenya in the EAC will curtail any meaningful achievement of a political federation in east Africa.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1. 1 Background to the study

African relations are not permanent rather what remains permanent are each country's interests in the relationship, and commonality of interests is what brings the countries together[1]. Absence of conflicting national interests between nations is what endures for a long time[2]. Max Weber further noted that it is the interests but not ideas that dominate directly the

actions of men. Therefore states will work very hard to ensure that their physical, political and cultural identities are protected against violations by other nations. Therefore so long as a country's interests which includes economic, political, social-cultural, security and stability is met it will coexist peacefully with other states. The struggle to control the actions of others have for long been at the behest of states in their relations and in advancement of their political, economic, bilateral and multilateral agendas. Everything revolves around what is in it for me. Welfare gains take the day as opposed to welfare losses with an objective of reaping maximum benefits from integrating. African regional integration has evolved over time from the Abuja treaty of June 1991 which established the AEC categorically sought ways of ensuring that African countries were able to promote economic, social and cultural development and the integration of African economies in order to increase economic self-reliance and promote an endogenous and self sustained development.

The dream espoused by the founding fathers of Pan-Africanism of achieving 'real' economic independence, a voice in the world affairs and dignity could only be achieved if African states integrated. In pursuit of individual interests cognizance of the benefits of one united block capable of advancing its agenda in world frontiers through RIA is of immense importance. The EAC could not be left behind in this new found path for gaining access to markets and employment opportunities for its populace.

The EAC community has a rich history that can be traced back in 1897 during the construction of the Kenya/Uganda railway. This was followed by the governor's conference (1900-1947) that later became the East African <https://assignbuster.com/the-role-kenyas-strategic-national-interests-politics-essay/>

High Commission (1947-1960) and was followed by the East African Common Services Organization (1961-1967) which led to the treaty of the East African cooperation (1967-1977)[3]. After the slow but sure death of the East African Cooperation in 1977 the three member countries that are Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania negotiated a mediation agreement that was signed in 1984. It sought to create a provision for exploring areas of future cooperation which bore fruit in 1991 when the then three heads of states held a meeting in Harare, Zimbabwe and reached an agreement to revive the East African cooperation. Consequent meetings followed that ultimately led to the formation of a tri-partite working group in 1993 to map out modalities for a renewed cooperation. The treaty establishing the East African Community was signed in 1999 by the three heads of states and came into force on 7th July, 2000.

Rwanda and Burundi expressed interest in joining the EAC and on 18th June 2007 they both assented to the EAC treaty and became full members on 1st July 2009. The renewed EAC decided to adapt a private sector rather than a state led development approach so as to strengthen the national economies and cope with globalization. Southern Sudan has applied for membership into the EAC and the strategic resource it brings in terms of oil will go a long way in boosting the resource strength base if it gets admission. Suffice to say that such strategic resources which are the cog in wheel of the five economies in the EAC will prove vital in already expanding population in the region.

1. 2 Statement of the problem

As countries come together to form a regional block they each have unique resources, ideologies, cultural inclination, political and economic sectors that enable them reap big in the opening up of borders of their integrating partners. The central problem of this study is premised on power asymmetry of countries in their national interests which make some countries advance their strategic interests at the expense of others creating inequality in sharing of welfare gains inherent in integration process. This therefore means that the integration process takes long and many of the protocols are not fully implemented due to suspicion and resentment between countries. In addition, issues of non-reciprocity arise whereby one country perceives that the other is getting more welfare gains economically hence derails any effort towards full integration. As a result each country only adheres to the rules of engagement based on how its interests are met. The journey from a free trade area, customs union, common market to a monetary union or ultimately political federation hence takes long and in some cases it remains a pipe dream. Therefore fulfillments of a country's strategic interests in the regional block hasten or inhibit the whole process and this is the veil this paper seeks to unveil.

1. 3 Objectives of the study

This research is anchored on the following objectives;

To find out the role Kenya's strategic national interests play in the EAC integration process.

To assess the institutional capacity of the EAC treaty in ensuring there is equity as a result of integration.

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To determine whether suspicion between member countries on one benefiting than others impedes full integration of EAC.

1. 4 Literature Review

Integration is a process whereby political actors in several distinct national settings are persuaded to shift loyalties, expectations and political activities toward a new center whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing national states[4]. This therefore underscores the fact that integration encompasses political, social, economic, security and cultural dynamics of nation's relations. This shifting of loyalties is what informs and enhances integration in any region of the world. Cooperation in all frontiers identified act as a pedestal upon which integration is anchored on.

Theoretical and empirical foundations of regional integration will shed light on this definition by Haas to help us deeply trace integration in Africa, while strategic interests in the EAC, European Union and SADC will inform this discourse under these thematic lines.

1. 4. 1 Foundations of regional integration in Africa

Three important schools of thoughts dating back to 1960s informed regional integration which can be categorized as follows; neoclassical economics, theory of comparative advantage and development economics. The theory of comparative advantage laid the ground work as relates to international trade with propositions on reductions or eliminations of tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade. Of particular importance were the policies to be adopted in so far as implementing those measures and the benefits thereof. The whole concept

of tariff was premised on the need to protect the infant industries. The <https://assignbuster.com/the-role-kenyas-strategic-national-interests-politics-essay/>

reasoning was that in order to gain a foothold in manufacturing, local companies needed protection from their foreign competitors. High tariffs were needed to support of import substitution which would lead to rapid industrialization in developing countries. However, this had ripple effects in that a lot of funds were available in the public sector which ultimately led to restrictive foreign exchange policies that led to overvalued currencies.

The import substitution wave was short lived since it led to underutilization of production capacity and competition was inhibited. Incentives were limited and export activities were swept under the carpet. It is only when certain economic and non-economic conditions are fulfilled that regional integration can succeed. These conditions are; structural stability, the rule of law, good governance, macroeconomic and monetary stability. Those countries that participated in the first wave of integration lacked one or more of these preconditions.

Regional economic integration may be formed at different levels starting with simplest of all a free trade area to a customs, common market, monetary union and eventually a political federation. Each of these levels requires distinct levels of commitments and degree of harmonization of policies on the part of member countries. All of these levels of economic integration have common objective. They all seek to benefit from trade creation, economies of scale, efficiency gains and product differentiation. In addition, regional integration aims at cushioning member countries from external shocks induced by fluctuations, uncertainty in the external world.

Regional economic integration can lead to trade creation or trade

diversion[5], whereby trade creation occurs if the reduction and ultimate <https://assignbuster.com/the-role-kenyas-strategic-national-interests-politics-essay/>

elimination of tariffs lead to the replacement of inefficient domestic industry in one member state with a more efficient industry from another member state. On the other hand trade diversion occurs if the reduction and elimination of tariffs result in the replacement of an efficient industry in a non-member state by an inefficient industry in a member state. Trade creation will ultimately lead to more trade since member countries enjoy increased efficiency. On the flip side trade diversion means loss of an efficient industry to member countries which would have led to more trade and as a result to welfare gains.

There are various specific requirements that inform regional integration formation, however regional integration as a process involves the merging of industrial structures, economic and administrative policies of member countries. This is premised on the recognition that welfare gains will be more as compared to unilateral policy at each country level. The Economic geography model is yet another avenue that needs to be explored[6]. This model states that under increasing returns to scale, economies of scale and trade, cost considerations determine the location of economic activity. This implies that countries can enhance economies of scale by locating a production activity in one location rather than each activity in each country. However, fear of empowering one country at the expense of poor countries who are member of a regional block derails this model. This fear by the poor countries has been cited by some scholars as the reason why regional integration takes long to materialize[7].

Pertinent questions arise from this does the identification of one location

where production activity will take place necessarily strengthens relations of
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the countries integrating? The country where a particular industry that produces a necessity product is located will be more empowered economically than the rest. This might create tension, resentment and beleaguer the whole concept and the industry may collapse if countries impose tariffs on the product. Krugman's model may at the end of the day lead to welfare losses if some member countries unilaterally boycott the purchase of the product and impose high tariffs.

1. 4. 2 Rationale of regional integration in Africa

The need for economic integration is usually as a result of the many problems that African countries are meet head-on ed with in their attempts to industrialize and bring up to date their economies[8]. These problems include difficulties in gaining access to all required materials, due to the irregular spread of natural resources; there are difficulties in finding affordable technologies to suit domestic market conditions; funds are hard to come by so as to meet their financial obligation; securing domestic and external markets for manufactured goods is quite a hurdle. In addition, most of African countries are small which means that their production capacities can hardly rival that of developed nations. Consequently, a substantial number of them compete with each another on international markets for the same agricultural products which reduces their strength of bargaining on such markets. This therefore calls for a need for regional arrangements so as to increase their negotiating power.

It has been observed that the small size of most of these developing economies in Africa restricts their ability to benefit from economies of scale

and viable import-substituting opportunities, therefore meaning that African countries should attempt to create effective economic integration[9].

Formation of regional integration arrangements has been pursued as a developmental objective by many African governments to alleviate poverty and benefit from synergy.

In addition the need to accelerate development of their particular economies informs regional integration in Africa. The shared history of colonialism that saw African countries undergo immense discrimination and slavery have seen Africans resolve to exploit their resources and be recognized as a competing force in the world economy. It is worth noting that trade deals between developed and developing world often discriminate against the latter's most lucrative and competitive products. The AGOA for instance excludes tobacco and peanuts while Europe's ' Everything but Arms' initiative retains extensive transnational periods for rice, sugar and bananas[10]. Africa therefore has to develop a market for these products and the only way of ensuring that they make money is forming REC's that will address the various concerns as regards tariff and non-tariff barriers. There is a need to reorient regional integration in Africa so that it can contribute to economic growth in ways that are unmatched and this can be done by helping underpin stable sound national macro-economic policies and rapid accumulation of human capital[11]. This way we would be able to reduce the high levels of poverty witnessed across the African continent.

1. 4. 3 National interests in the EAC

Before we look at national interests in EAC it will be crucial to understand what are national interests? There are two types of national interest namely: vital and secondary interests[12]. Vital interests are centered on security of an independent nation, and the protection of its institutions, people and values, and are therefore those interests that have direct consequences for the practical survival of the state. In terms of government this is based on the military, defense, security and economic policy of the state. Vital national interests are much less open to political manipulation because they are much more objective by nature, and more a product of necessity. Secondary interests are essentially everything which pertains to the wealth, prosperity and progression of the state. They are merely concerned with development of the state. At the end of the day national interests are about goals and objectives in the international system; strategy is the means by which to realize them through foreign policy. The interests of the state are foundationally linked to the interests of its people. This is why people have to be involved through the electorate system so as to choose leaders who they believe are best suited to address their interests. Democracy therefore cannot be separated with national interests just like the people have to participate in a referendum to if they want a new constitutional dispensation or not. The ballot box provides people that democratic right to participate in advancement of their country's national interests.

The three countries that is Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania when they decided to come together and integrate they were doing so with each country having its interests for doing so. Suffice to say that the whole idea to cooperate was at the behest of fresh break away from colonialism. Remembering that Self-

determination, and how that self-determination fits against the outside world is what underlies national interests in democracies, these countries each had to craft their own strategic interests. During this time nation building was at its lightening speed and each of these countries had its ambitions of reaping the benefits of independence. As a result, political federation could hardly overdo nation building[13]which was poised at pursuing particular interests to propel each of the country. Nonetheless personal and ideological differences precipitated the collapse of the East African Cooperation[14]. Whereas Kenya rooted for a capitalist economy, Tanzania opted for a socialist path while Uganda opted for a mixed economic oath. These economic paths were all geared towards ensuring that each country meets its strategic interest. As Clausewitz said that all state behavior is motivated by its need to survive and prosper that's why each of these states was behaving this way.

The East African Cooperation is said to have been dominated by Kenya which was perceived to be an agent of western imperialism to contain socialist belt that was encroaching the region[15]. As a result Tanzania in a bid to avoid economic domination and exploitation turned towards the south first by setting up the Tazara railway line with mineral rich Zambia and secondly by focusing on liberation struggles to counter Kenya's dominance. This therefore means that each country was skeptical of the other and every move political, economical, social-cultural was geared towards meeting its interests. Anything centrally to that was not feasible.

Kenya's interests in the EAC have for a long time been anchored on taking up the market opportunities for its burgeoning manufacturing companies.
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Similarly, Tanzania has over the years been apprehensive about completely opening up its borders to EAC member countries in particular Kenya[16]. Of particular interest is that a landlocked country like Uganda has over the years partnered with Kenya so as to continue benefiting from Kenya's imports which would be expensive if routed through Tanzania. It therefore has been very instrumental in fostering peaceful relations with Kenya for its national interests. This shows why president Museveni has been very vocal in opposing the trial of Kenya's president and deputy president in the ICC for crimes against humanity.

It is worth noting that each of the EAC countries have visions that they seek to achieve in a given timeframe. Kenya has vision 2030, Uganda has vision 2035, Tanzania has vision 2025, Rwanda's is vision 2020 and Burundi is vision 2020[17]. Kenya seeks to be globally competitive and prosperous with a high quality of life. Priority areas being to achieve various objectives including meeting regional and global commitments. This therefore means Kenya is more than willing to cooperate with the rest of the countries in ensuring there is full EAC integration. This is my hypotheses however; it will continue to advance its national interests in the region if it is to achieve its vision. Uganda seeks to transform Ugandan society from peasant to a modern prosperous country with priority areas being prominence given to knowledge based economy; Tanzania seeks to have high quality of life anchored on peace, stability, unity, and good governance, rule of law, resilient economy and competitiveness with priority areas being to inculcate hard work, investment and savings culture, knowledge based economy, infrastructure development, and private Sector Development; Rwanda seeks

to become a middle income country by 2020 giving priority to reconstruction, HR development and integration to regional and global economy; Burundi seeks Sustainable peace and stability and achievement of global development commitments in line with MDGS with priority being Poverty reduction, reconstruction and institutional development. The EAC treaty vision is to attain a prosperous, competitive, secure and politically united East Africa with priorities being to, widen and deepen economic, political, social and cultural integration at regional and global levels[18].

For each of the five countries to achieve these visions they must pursue certain strategies so as to be able to meet the aforesaid deadlines. Each country will work towards pursuing individual interests that are not only in line with their foreign policy but also in line with their nation's interests. Of particular interests is the manner in which each of the countries has targets to be a middle income country by 2030.

1. 4. 4 National interests in the European Union

Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg created the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) to run their heavy industries coal and steel under a common management. In this way, none could solely make the weapons of war to turn against the other. However, from closer analysis the reason for creating ECSC was to avert Germany from gaining control of steel denying other countries steel a vital commodity to rebuild their economies[19]. In ECSC availability of resources to facilitate building national industries was the utmost vital element. French producers were fighting for favorable access to German coal[20]while Belgium, Dutch and

Italian firms were demanding adjustment to subsidies and time to build their industries[21]. Each country was rooting for its national interests geared towards improving its economic prospects which it would use to assert its authority in the region. The French government controlled domestic prices of steel all aimed at helping its domestic producers gain access to cheap steel in complete violation of the ECSC treaty[22]. This therefore meant that each country in the ECSC treaty was rooting for ways it would benefit from the integration and in areas it deemed were inhibiting this they opted to circumvent the treaty. In 1957 the European Economic Community was created in a bid to accommodate more members and also remove bottlenecks in trade. The EEC, ECSC and EURATOM went further to form the European commission, European council and European parliament to address member countries national interests.

The capacity to create the common European interest, as affirmed by the European Commission, is alive in the Commission and the Council, and is set in motion by the constant introduction and approval of EU treaties. The Commission and the Council have a mandate to act first and foremost in the 'Common European interest'[23]. When the EEC was conceived, countries gave up their sovereignty and only the level of sovereignty determined how a country could exercise its national interests. Only those countries that did not give up their sovereignty in totality to the European Union could fully pursue their national interests in Europe. For example Great Britain is a member of the EU however, in the EU; English policies create a relentless string of crises. They don't have the euro currency, they're not part of the Schengen agreement with its borderless interior, and they don't participate

in collective bank supervision. Therefore, due to UK national interests the progress of the entire of Europe is constrained[24] as Britain is reluctant to expedite activities that are not in line with its national and strategic interests. More so on issues regarding currency, individually the sterling pound is stronger than the euro hence UK refuses to give up its monetary strength as it seeks to continue being a reckoning force internationally.

Suffice to say that the European Union integration is rich and there is a political federation with a single currency the Euro. The EAC has a long way to go where each country is yet to give up its currency for a unitary currency. Kenya sees it will lose its strength since its Kshs is superior to Uganda's and Tanzania's Shilling. As a matter of fact Kenya would want to continue gaining more revenue when it trades with either Tanzania or Uganda due to its currency strength. Rwanda and Burundi similarly would be reluctant to give up their francs.

Before the introduction of a common currency, the Europe Commission declared that it would only work in conjunction with a collective fiscal policy. The Commission proposed that the European Union help Greece to develop a tax system based on collective European standards. Germany, Poland and UK vetoed it; reason was because of their national interests. The Polish said, " We don't want a collective European tax law, since we're assuming at the moment that we can bring in businesses and capital through tax incentives." The Germans also voted against it because they assumed that the Commission was using this as a step toward a Europe wide fiscal system which they did not want then. Their argument was that tax limits and budget limits had to remain issues of national sovereignty[25].

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In the European Union the supranational interests are pursued by the EU on behalf of members which therefore means that only those countries that did not give up their complete sovereignty can pursue individual interest. In addition, the powers of individual countries influence voting patterns for particular interests in the European region. This is quite interesting does it mean that is why regional bodies are afraid of going the EU way more so EAC and that is why the integration process is slow? Or the power asymmetry in EAC is the reason why there is a lot of suspicion between countries? That and more we shall seek to unveil.

1. 4. 5 National Interests in Southern Africa Development Community (SADC)

The Southern Africa Development Community idea was mooted against a backdrop of the need to reduce economic dependence on South Africa. After a series of economic conferences held in Tanzania between 3rd and 4th July 1979 the Southern African Development Coordination Corporation (SADCC) was mooted. The Lusaka economic summit produced the historic declaration of ‘ Southern Africa toward Economic liberation’. The primary objective was to reduce the over dependence of SADCC member countries on largely white dominated South Africa or any other country. In addition, the formation of SADCC was to liberate South Africa from the apartheid rule and also struggle for liberation of Namibia from colonial rule. In addition, the member countries were working towards coordination of industrial and energy project so as to advance their national interests in the region with Angola responsible for energy conservation and Tanzania responsible for harmonization of industrial programs in the region[26].

SADCC member countries were so engulfed in the idea of protecting their economies. They even reduced electricity supply from South Africa and went ahead to empower Mozambique to supply electricity to countries like Lesotho and Swaziland in a bid to counter South Africa hegemony quest in the region. However, isolating South Africa and quest to bypass it in terms of trade proved impossible considering that 18% of Mozambique’s imports, 29% of Malawi’s and about 66% of Botswana’s and over 90% of Swaziland and Lesotho’s imports had their origin in South Africa[27]. The myriad problems that faced SADCC member countries more so focus on containing South Africa inhibited the progress of the block as South Africa reacted swiftly.

South Africa was acting in pursuit of its national interests of ensuring that it did not lose key markets in the region.

SADC was incorporated in 1992 with the sole aim of integration of economic development in the region. Giving cognizance to the fact that the member countries have diverse economic size and interests most countries are constrained by expensive and inefficient industries. Competition for vast markets in the region from the large population means that every country competes for a share.

1. 4. 6 Managing economic disparities in the EAC

Pangestu and Scolla