

COVID-19 Global Pandemic and the East African Community Integration Process: An Analytical Context of Kenya-Tanzania Relations

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Abstract

The impact of a global pandemic on regional integration cannot be underestimated. Cooperation and conflicts are witnessed within regional blocks as individual states adopt strategic measures in response to the global pandemic. Such was the case in 2020-2021 with the advent of COVID-19. The East Africa Community (EAC) is not an exception to this reality. Focusing on Kenya-Tanzania relations, this study explores the impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic on the EAC's integration process. The study argues that the COVID-19 pandemic had significant implications on the foreign policy behaviour of partner states on the integration process within the EAC. To advance this argument, the study explores the Kenya-Tanzania relations during the COVID-19 pandemic. The neo-regionalism theory is adopted which underscores openness and cooperation within the global economy, and emphasizes the importance of non-state actors, in driving the integration process. The study finds that the conceptualisation of the COVID-19 pandemic by the respective Heads of State of Kenya and Tanzania resulted in differing strategic responses leading to strained relations between the two states, a situation that impacted the EAC integration process.

Key words: *COVID 19, East African Community, Regional Integration, Foreign Policy*

Abbreviations

CCM – Chama Cha Mapinduzi

COVID-19 - Coronavirus Disease 2019

EABC – East Africa Business Council

EAC - East African Community

GDP - Gross Domestic Product

IOM – International Organization for Migration

KNBS - Kenya National Bureau of Statistics

LPG - Liquefied Petroleum Gas

MERS - Middle East Respiratory Syndrome

MSME - Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises

MoH – Ministry of Health

NRT - New Regionalism Theory

OSBPs - One-Stop Border Points

SARS - Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome

SARS-CoV-2 - Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2

UNCTAD - United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

WAHO – West African Health Organization

WHO - World Health Organization

Introduction

A global pandemic is an infectious disease outbreak that extends across numerous countries or continents, generating enormous morbidity, mortality, and societal upheaval (Ducharme, 2020). It is distinguished by rapid disease transmission, a lack of population immunity, and a threat to public health, economic, and social implications, necessitating coordinated worldwide measures to regulate and reduce its impact (Grennan, 2019; Piret & Boivin, 2020).

The newly identified infectious coronavirus - Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) first emerged in Wuhan, China, towards the end of 2019 causing untold agony for humanity and the loss of life. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared it a global health emergency on January 30, 2020, and subsequently classified it as a pandemic on March 11, 2020 (Morens et al, 2020; Nicola et al, 2020; WHO, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic exposed vulnerabilities in the international system, leading to a realignment of power dynamics and tensions between countries (Abduazimov, 2022; Trenin & Wright, 2021). It also brought to light existing global health disparities, raised security concerns, and exposed economic vulnerabilities, necessitating health diplomacy and multilateral cooperation on local, regional, and international levels in effectively responding to the disease (UN, 2020; WHO, 2021).

According to Ramadhani (2023) the COVID-19 global pandemic has had a substantial impact on regional integration, including within the East Africa Community (EAC). This study argues that the pandemic has significantly influenced the foreign policy behaviour of partner states and its impact on the integration efforts within the EAC. The study adopts the neo-regionalism theory propounded by Söderbaum (2005) and advanced by Adar (2008) particularly as applies to the East African region. Neo-regionalism highlights the importance of openness, cooperation, and the involvement of non-state actors in driving the integration process within the global economy.

Established in 1967, the EAC consists of seven countries in Eastern Africa: Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Since the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted international relations and state behaviour with regard to foreign policy, member nations within the EAC had to reconsider their foreign policies in

some way to prevent the virus from spreading both inside and outside of their borders. In view of the foregoing, this study explores the EAC's response to COVID-19 and its subsequent effect on the bilateral ties between Kenya and Tanzania and the EAC regional integration process.

The significance of this study is to give a holistic understanding of the multifaceted effects of the pandemic on the EAC's integration process focusing on Kenya and Tanzania. The study not only provides ways in which the EAC responded to the challenges posed by the pandemic, but also offers opportunities to strengthen resilience and adaptability in future global challenges such as developing integrated systems and informing strategies for effective collaboration in the EAC. Further, the foreign policy behavior of partner states will have to adopt mechanisms to deal in the face of such occurrences. This study investigates if the COVID-19 pandemic caused any divergence at all in the approaches taken by the respective Heads of State of Kenya and Tanzania. In the end, the study aims to unravel whether the divergent responses have any effect on regional integration within the EAC.

The study is divided into three main sections. The first section focuses on applying the neo-regionalism theory to analyse the integration process within the EAC. The second section examines the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the relations between Kenya and Tanzania. The third section evaluates the implications of the pandemic on the overall integration process within the EAC.

New Regionalism Theory - A Theoretical Framework for Analysis

The notion of regionalism refers to a structure in which countries in close geographical proximity form a political or economic entity to advance their national interests (Farrell & Lim, 2005). As a concept, regionalism is a new qualitative phenomenon that renders the concept of "new regionalism" particularly nascent, having emerged in the mid-1980s. Söderbaum and Shaw (2003) define new regionalism as a form of known and unknown relationships among one to three countries including non-state actors, most notably civil societies, and private entities.

The New Regionalism Theory (NRT) is a comprehensive and multi-faceted process that involves a transition from a region's relatively diverse characteristics to greater uniformity in various aspects, notably encompassing culture, security, economic policies, and political systems, among others (Adar, 2005). Wheeler (2002) describes the key characteristics that point to the concept of new regionalism to include a focus on a specific region; a response to particular post-modern issues in a region; an all-inclusive approach to issues integrating for instance the environment and the economy; a renewed emphasis to infrastructure, urban planning, a sense of place; and a proactive position by the architects of new regionalism. Hence, new regionalism signifies the process by which a region transitions from relative diversity to increased oneness in terms of sociocultural, economic, and security conditions. (Adar 2005; Hettne & Söderbaum 1998; Palmer 1991; Robson 1993).

The relevance of NRT to the EAC lies in its ability to provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the dynamics of regional integration. In relation to the new regionalism theory, regional integration is shaped by a combination of external and internal factors, including globalization, regionalism, interdependence, and domestic politics. In the context of the EAC, this means that the process of regional integration is influenced by factors such as trade liberalization, political cooperation, and the convergence of economic interests, as well as the political and economic dynamics within each member state. Further, new regionalism in the EAC highlights the importance of involving local actors, including the private sector, civil society, and local government, in shaping and implementing regional integration initiatives. This approach is crucial in ensuring the EAC's integration endeavours are aligned with the desires and requirements of its populace, while concurrently fostering economic growth and development. Using the fundamental components of NRT discussed above, this study explores the foreign policy behaviour of Kenya and Tanzania in relation to their response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the EAC integration process.

East African Community: COVID-19 and Regional Integration

Regional integration is a process wherein neighboring states come together through agreements to enhance cooperation by establishing shared institutions and adhering to common rules (Shaheed, 2015). From cooperation to integration, this logical progression

entails two or more nation-states agreeing to collaborate closely and work together in pursuit of objectives such as peace, stability, and prosperity (Mattli, 1999; Schiff, 2003; Shaheed, 2015). Regional integration also represents an endeavour to attain mutual benefits through cooperation within a group of self-interested states in an anarchical international system (Yoshimatsu, 2008). To achieve effective regional cohesion, the partner states must address collective challenges inherent in international integration.

Adar (2005) describes integration as both a process and a condition. As a process, “entities, in this case, states, transfer some of their loyalties and activities to the newly formed establishment where both legal and juridical mandates are derived from the member nation-states” (Adar, 2005: 29). As a condition, the regional organization formed has control over certain key areas such as the allocation of resources (Adar 2005). Integration can therefore be defined as the establishment and development of institutional procedures through which values are distributed in a geolocation amongst political divisions (Lim & Vreeland, 2013). This is, however, a new discourse in foreign policy because initially, the regional organization was pegged on the economic improvement of the member states. In addition to economic development, it has a component of foreign policy that heavily entails aspects of peace and security. This has brought forth complexities in the formulation process of foreign policy among member states, specifically Kenya.

As previously stated, the EAC's economic integration process began during the British colonial era. At independence, African states worked to re-establish the EAC because of the economic gains made by the region initially as a bloc. The EAC's economic integration process is guided by various frameworks and agreements. The creation of a customs union, a common market, a monetary union and a political federation are all currently recognized as the EAC's objectives in Article 5 of the EAC Treaty 2000. The EAC has had two phases of economic integration. The first phase of economic integration, which began in 1999 and ended in 2010. During this phase, the EAC focused on creating a customs union and a common market. The customs union eliminated internal tariffs among EAC member countries and established a common external tariff for goods imported from outside the community. The common market allowed for the free movement of goods, services, capital,

and skilled labour within the EAC member states (EAC, 1999; Buigut, 2016; Gastorn & Masinde 2017). The Customs Union has contributed to increased intra-regional trade, with trade among EAC member states growing from \$2.8 billion in 2005 to \$5.3 billion in 2018 (EAC, 2019).

The second phase of economic integration began in 2010 and is ongoing. During this phase, the EAC is focusing on creating a monetary union and a political federation. The monetary union will establish a single currency for the EAC member states. The political federation will create a single political entity for the EAC member states (Adar, 2008; EAC, 1999; Kaburu & Adar, 2020). The main difference between the first phase and the second phase is the level of integration that is being pursued. While phase one focused on creating a customs union and a common market, which are relatively low levels of integration, phase two is focusing on creating a monetary union and a political federation, which are higher levels of integration.

The EAC has implemented a common external tariff, enabling member states to negotiate trade agreements collectively and providing a more favourable business environment for both regional and international trade (World Bank, 2020). The EAC Common Market Protocol, signed in 2009, aims to facilitate the unrestricted flow of goods, services, capital, and labour within the region. It facilitates the establishment of a single market, enabling businesses to operate across borders with reduced barriers. The Common Market Protocol has resulted to the liberalization of services sectors, including tourism, finance, and telecommunications, and has allowed for the free movement of skilled labour, enhancing regional economic integration (World Bank, 2020). The EAC has adopted a variety of legal instruments to facilitate the economic integration process as well as promote regional trade, investment, and economic cooperation among its member states.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had significant impacts on the relationships of partner states in the EAC, affecting virtually every aspect of international relations, including trade, investment, migration, and security. The first, and most, notable impact of COVID-19 on the EAC foreign policy is the disruption of trade and investment flows. The pandemic has led to a global economic downturn, which has affected the economies of EAC member states. For

example, Kenya's exports to the rest of the world declined by 9.9% in 2020, while Tanzania's exports fell by 7.5% (Bank of Tanzania, 2021; Central Bank of Kenya, 2021). In addition, the pandemic has disrupted trade and the movement of goods and people across borders, which has slowed down the progress of the integration (Wainaina & Gachara, 2020). According to a report by the East African Business Council (EABC), the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a slowdown in the implementation of the EAC Common Market Protocol and hindered the integration process (EABC, 2020). Cross-border trade has reduced, and the flow of goods, services, and people, which are critical components of the EAC integration, has decreased (African Development Bank, 2020; Wainaina & Gachara, 2020).

The second notable impact is caused by the disruption of global migration patterns by the COVID-19 epidemic according to research by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) (UNCTAD, 2020). In the year 2020, a minimum of 300,000 migrants within the East and Horn of Africa region experienced repercussions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as indicated by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in its annual flagship report on migration trends and population movements (International Organization for Migration, 2020). The limitations imposed by COVID-19 on travel and economic operations have disturbed conventional migration trends, affecting both internal movement within the EAC and the flow of migration beyond. (UNCTAD, 2020; Ackello-Ogutu et al, 2021).

The third notable impact is increased insecurity in the EAC region. The allocation of resources and the management of the pandemic response has led to increased tensions between member states. For example, in March 2021, there were reports of cross-border smuggling of COVID-19 vaccines in the region, which led to diplomatic tensions between some EAC member states (Daily Monitor, 2021).

The fourth notable impact is the decline of tourism and hospitality services in the EAC Partner states. The tourism industry has historically been susceptible to pandemics and global crises, experiencing significant declines during outbreaks such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), Swine Flu, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), and Ebola.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic has been particularly devastating. Worldwide, the Travel & Tourism sector suffered a loss of almost US\$4.5 trillion in 2020, resulting in a 49.1% decline in its contribution to global Gross Domestic Product (GDP). 62 million jobs were lost, and domestic and international visitor spending plummeted by 45% and 69.4%, respectively (Rwigema, 2021).

In Africa, tourism had been growing significantly before the pandemic, contributing to GDP and employment. However, the region experienced a 49.2% drop in Travel & Tourism GDP in 2020, with employment losses reaching 29.3% (Rwigema, 2021). The rapid spread of COVID-19 resulted in lockdowns and travel restrictions in nations heavily impacted by the pandemic, effectively halting tourism activity. This had a profound effect on the arrival of international tourists, leading to a significant decrease in revenue and causing job losses in the tourism sector. The EAC region, which is primarily reliant on tourism, had a significant drop in income from global exports, resulting in a major economic crisis (Chenyambuga & Mneney, 2022). Tanzania, Rwanda, and Kenya, which rely significantly on tourism, were particularly hard hit, with GDP contributions from this sector falling precipitously. Due to significant cancellations of reservations and events, the hotel industry, in particular, faced historically low-profit margins. As a result, the entire economy and job opportunities in the region suffered (Jireh & Nzau, 2022). The report emphasizes the exceptional challenges confronting the EAC region's tourism and hospitality industries, underlining the necessity for deliberate interventions and support to revitalize these crucial sectors post-COVID-19 (Chenyambuga & Mneney, 2022).

The fifth notable impact is the exacerbation of educational inequality between students of varied socioeconomic backgrounds and from urban and rural locations. The shutdown of the schools due to COVID-19 may not have had an impact to all kids equally. The pandemic had forced the temporary closure of educational institutions globally, creating a negative impact on students, parents and teachers. Children from underprivileged backgrounds experienced considerably greater challenges than their more advantaged counterparts during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), school closures have impacted over 1.5 billion students across 195 countries

(Tadesse & Muluye, 2020). School closures caused children to lose access to essential needs provided by institutions, such as meals and sanitary towels, which harmed disadvantaged students (Ngwacho, 2020). The migrant and displaced children faced discrimination and were excluded from many relief measures due to their non-national status (Nyaata, 2022).

The prolonged shutdown of schools has caused an alarming increase in pupil drop-out rates while the prolonged period of school closures made at-risk or vulnerable students even more vulnerable to dropping out of school. For some kids, school closures may have meant suffering financial challenges, domestic duties, or a lack of support, making it difficult for them to return to school once the closures were lifted. Dropping out was especially concerning for these students because it could have long-term negative implications such as diminished possibilities for personal development, limited access to future jobs, and perpetuating cycles of poverty (Nyaata, 2022).

In addition, there has been a severe economic downturn, along with the closure of education and transportation systems. As a result, there has been a transition to distance learning solutions, encompassing various platforms, educational apps, and resources aimed at supporting parents, students, and educators. Nevertheless, in underdeveloped nations, the challenge lies in the absence of widespread internet access, information technology infrastructure, educational resources, and digital skills, making distance learning a significant struggle for teachers, students, and families (Tadesse & Muluye, 2020). Both pupils and teachers were anxious as the regular learning process was disrupted. The abrupt move to remote and online learning, along with the pandemic's unpredictability, created a sense of discomfort and uncertainty in the educational environment. This increased anxiety had a negative impact on learning outcomes because it impaired students' capacity to focus, engage, and retain material efficiently (Ngwacho, 2020).

Notably, the EAC Treaty of 2000 foresaw the possibility of a health crisis and included a provision requiring cooperation among member states in health matters, encompassing collaborative efforts to manage pandemics that might endanger the health and welfare of residents within the partner states (EAC, 2000). This provision proved to be important with

the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. In tandem with that provision, the EAC Secretariat scripted a regional COVID-19 response plan, which member states were to implement to avert the pandemic's effects (EAC, 2020, p. 6). The EAC regional response plan sought to improve regional capacity for surveillance and management, facilitate the flow of goods and services, slow the spread of COVID-19, and mitigate the socio-economic effects of the pandemic, including by promoting and utilizing local products for basic necessities (EAC, 2020, p. 7-8).

To facilitate the execution of the EAC regional COVID-19 response plan, a number of activities were put in place. These included training an EAC laboratory expert from each member state, procuring 9 mobile clinics for each member state, providing each member state with 100 test kits for COVID-19 and developing EAC administrative guidelines to facilitate the movement of goods and services in the region (EAC, 2020, p. 8-9). This strategy is similar to that of ECOWAS's West African Health Organization (WAHO) where it trained laboratory personnel from different West African countries and provided participants with test kits (Herpolsheimer 2022). Within the Eastern African region, the effects of COVID-19 were felt in different ways and as such, the actions pursued by the individual governments varied in terms of their areas of emphasis and extent (Makumi, Kimotho & Sisay, 2020). Owing to the sovereignty of each member state, each sought to adopt its own national strategies to combat the pandemic. The EAC member states such as Uganda and Rwanda imposed total lockdowns while others like Kenya and South Sudan opted for partial lockdowns. In Tanzania and Burundi, no lockdown was imposed. In those circumstances, Burundi held general elections in May 2020 (Apuuli, 2021).

The EAC's COVID-19 plan aligns with the EAC's regionalist goals that are highlighted in the EAC Treaty in a number of ways. Firstly, it emphasizes the importance of cooperation and coordination between the EAC member states. This is in line with the EAC Treaty, which states that the EAC's goal is to “promote sustainable development and economic integration through the coordination of policies and programs in the areas of trade, investment, infrastructure, agriculture, education, research, science and technology, human resource development, and other areas of common interest” (Secretariat, EAC 2020). Secondly, it

focuses on the unrestricted movement of goods, services, capital, and people. This is also in line with the EAC Treaty, which states that the EAC “shall establish a customs union, a common market, a monetary union, and a political federation”. Thirdly, it aims to promote regional economic growth and development. This is also in line with the EAC Treaty, which states that the EAC “shall promote sustainable development and economic integration through the coordination of policies and programs in the areas of trade, investment, infrastructure, agriculture, education, research, science and technology, human resource development, and other areas of common interest” (Secretariat, EAC 2020).

The EAC COVID-19 plan emphasizes the meaning of collaboration and synchronization between the EAC member states, focuses on the free movement of goods, services, capital, and people, and aims to promote regional economic growth and development. For instance, the plan includes measures to coordinate the testing and vaccination campaigns of the EAC member states. This will help to ensure that the virus is contained, and that the region is able to recover economically. In addition, the plan includes measures to facilitate the movement of essential goods and services across the EAC. This will help to ensure that the region's economies remain open, and that people can continue to access the goods and services they need. The plan also includes measures to support the EAC's most vulnerable populations. This would help to ensure that the region's most vulnerable people are not disproportionately affected by the pandemic. Therefore, it may be stated that if implemented by its member states, the EAC's COVID-19 response plan would ideally promote regional integration. The next section studies the implementation of the EAC's response plan in Kenya and Tanzania, particularly, to assess how it affected their bilateral relations (Secretariat, EAC 2020).

Kenya-Tanzania Relationship Before and Post COVID-19 Pandemic

Even before the creation of the Treaty establishing the EAC in 2000, cross border trade flourished although according to Ackello-Ogotu & Echessah (1997), this went unrecorded. The first EAC integration agenda pursued by Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda between 1967–1977 collapsed in part due to divergent economic policies, for instance, Kenya and Tanzania's occasional differences (Siziba, 2016). Tanzania exports products like cereals, wood, and edible vegetables to Kenya while pharmaceutical products, plastic, iron, and steel

are exported to Tanzania from Kenya (Shinyekwa & Bulime, 2021). In 2017 a briefing from Oxford Analytica reported that Kenya momentarily banned the import of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) from Tanzania, citing reasons related to safety. In retaliation, Tanzania responded by prohibiting the importation of dairy goods and tobacco from Kenya (Analytica, 2017). The report further underscored that an entire herd of 1,300 cattle that had crossed into Tanzania from Kenya was captured and auctioned. Similarly, an estimated 6500-day-old chicks from Kenya were burned alive with the allegation that they were diseased (Analytica, 2017).

The common market protocol of the EAC which became operational in 2015 aimed to promote the unrestricted flow of goods, services, capital, and individuals within the region. However, Tanzania banned the import of several Kenyan items in 2017, claiming safety concerns. Following that, Presidents Kenyatta and Magufuli inked agreements in 2018 to increase economic cooperation and settle trade disputes, thereby improving their ties (Tiampati & Onyango, 2022). Both countries have also worked together to resolve security concerns along their common border. The volume of trade between Kenya and Tanzania constitutes over 50% of the whole EAC trade (Ejones, Agbola & Mahmood 2021).

EAC Partners	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Tanzania	126.2	166.1	175.9	269.8	258.2
Uganda	189.9	406.5	488.1	336.2	225.1
Rwanda	76	16.3	117.7	13.8	19.2
Burundi	0.7	0.6	0.7	0.6	3.3
South Sudan	-	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.4
Total EAC	324.4	589.8	676.5	607.9	506.2

*Table 1: Kenya's Imports from EAC Partner States 2016-2020 (US\$ million)
Source: KRA, KNBS and CBK, 2021*

Between 2016 and 2020, the bilateral trade between Kenya and Tanzania showcased notable fluctuations. Kenya's imports from Tanzania experienced a steady growth trajectory, rising from \$126.2 million in 2016 to \$258.2 million in 2020 as shown in Table 1. Throughout this period, Tanzania remained a significant trade partner for Kenya, consistently providing various goods and services to meet Kenya's demand. The consistent growth in imports from Tanzania highlights the strengthening economic ties and cooperation between the two neighbouring East African countries. These trade dynamics reflect a positive trend of increasing commerce and mutual economic benefits, fostering further integration and partnership between Kenya and Tanzania during the given five-year period.

Trade	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Kenya	793.9	168.4	291.5	214.1	269.9	230.2
Rwanda	41.3	57.4	60.5	79.7	190.9	208.2
Uganda	50.4	21.7	27.5	105.7	123.7	191.3
Burundi	39.2	52.5	50.8	48.0	87.9	179.5
South Sudan	-	-	0.2	1.1	2.0	3.4

*Table 2: Tanzania's Export Trade with EAC Partner States 2016 – 2020 (US\$ million)
Source: Tanzania National Bureau of Statistics, 2021*

Table 2 reveals the dynamic trade relationship between Kenya and Tanzania within the EAC from 2016 to 2020. During this period, Kenya consistently remained Tanzania's largest trading partner, with significant fluctuations in export values. Tanzania's exports to Kenya started at \$168.4 million in 2016, experienced a substantial growth to \$291.5 million in 2017, but then declined in subsequent years, reaching \$230.2 million in 2020. Despite the variations, Kenya continued to be a critical market for Tanzanian goods, reflecting the countries' geographical proximity and strong economic ties. This trade pattern showcases the evolving trade dynamics between Kenya and Tanzania within the EAC, with both countries

experiencing shifts in their trade balances as they engage in bilateral commerce and foster regional economic integration.

From 2020 to 2021, the world was crippled by the COVID-19 pandemic. The responses to the COVID-19 pandemic had been greatly influenced by the perspectives and actions of political leaders worldwide, as they navigated the complexities of managing public health crises. A notable example of this phenomenon was observed in the divergent approaches taken by Uhuru Kenyatta, the President of Kenya, and the late John Pombe Magufuli, former President of Tanzania, in conceptualizing and addressing the challenges posed by the virus. Their contrasting strategies not only reflected their individual leadership styles but also had profound implications for the formulation of public health policies and the outcomes of the pandemic within their respective nations.

Kenya and Tanzania's distinct political systems, healthcare infrastructure, and economic susceptibilities undoubtedly shaped their responses to the pandemic. The unique strategies and viewpoints in dealing with the novel virus take centre stage in this study. This study is cognisant that strained relations between Kenya and Tanzania were ever present prior to the onset of the pandemic thus these marked differences were exacerbated at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. The subsequent analysis will reveal the implication of these differences.

Communication

The first notable difference is concerned with communication. This involves public statements, pronouncements and general communication addressed to the public. Kenyatta embraced a careful and evidence-driven strategy mixed with law-and-order approach (Nasubo, Nyakwaka & Kali, 2022). Consistently recognizing the gravity of the virus. He also held several meetings with the health institutions and did public addresses to concerned Kenyans throughout the period of the pandemic. Kenyatta also responded fairly quickly after the first documented COVID-19 case (Mugabe et al., 2020). According to Zgovu (2021), Kenya reported the first COVID-19 case in East Africa on March 12, 2020, and Tanzania followed suit only a few days later on March 16, 2020. Magufuli in contrast to Kenyatta,

downplayed the seriousness of the virus, expressing doubts about its existence and the effectiveness of measures such as lockdowns and vaccines. Magufuli advocated for alternative remedies and urged citizens to maintain their regular day-to-day activities. Kwayu (2020), posits that Magufuli asserted that the protection of Tanzanians would come from God and remedies such as steam inhalation. Makoni (2021) further posits that Magufuli also publicly criticized vaccines, alleging that they were part of a Western conspiracy aimed at exploiting Africa's resources, and he opposed the use of masks and social distancing measures.

Policy Responses

The second point of departure within the two regimes is in policy enactment and responses. Kenyatta promoted and encouraged the use of masks, adherence to social distancing, and vaccination. He also implemented both nation-wide and inter-county lockdowns and restrictions at different stages throughout the pandemic. Further, the Kenyan government put in place some mitigating measures to stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus in the country such as the suspension of international flights except for cargo flights, mandatory 14-day quarantine at own cost on arrival to Kenya, and enforcement of dusk to dawn curfew except critical and essential personnel. Notably learning institutions were closed as the effects of COVID-19 were felt and worship areas suffered the same fate as the Ministry of Health (MoH) remained cognisant to reduce the spread of the virus (MoH GoK, 2020). In contrast to the Tanzanian government, the Kenyan government actively sought assistance from the international community and collaborated with the WHO. Kenyatta and the Health Cabinet Secretary by extension emphasized the importance of following public health guidelines, such as wearing masks, practicing social distancing, and implementing lockdown measures to curb the spread of the virus.

Conversely, President Magufuli did not support the WHO's efforts and downplayed the severity of the COVID-19 threat. As a result, Tanzania stopped reporting COVID-19 infection data from May 2021, after reporting 509 cases and 21 deaths (Apuuli, 2021; Wekesa, 2020). Thus, lockdown measures and the requirement to wear face masks in public places, which had been imposed during March and April 2020, were suddenly lifted when President Magufuli declared the country to be free of COVID-19. Magufuli opposed lockdowns and

limitation of movement around the country, giving precedence to economic activity over public health considerations. Magufuli downplayed the severity of the pandemic and expressed scepticism about the efficacy of measures such as mask-wearing and lockdowns. He made statements that minimized the impact of COVID-19 in Tanzania and discouraged excessive fear or panic among citizens. Further, he discouraged testing and endorsed alternative treatments even after frequently receiving criticism from medical experts. This engendered a lack of belief in the accuracy and transparency of Tanzania's official COVID-19 data that was being reported.

The extent of these policy decisions cut across to the EAC as a region. This is because both the steps taken and the ones not taken by Tanzania perplexed the member States of the EAC, as they had to reconfigure how to handle travel and trade with Tanzania. One of the primary issues was that Tanzania lacked a coordinated plan to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The lack of a unified plan was unravelled in the way for instance, while Tanzanian schools, universities, and big public gatherings were discouraged to reduce the spread of the virus, religious, funeral ceremonies and public transportation were still allowed to operate as usual (MoH Tanzania, 2020).

Economic Considerations

The third ambit of the differences in approaches is in the proposed economic considerations by both countries. Uhuru Kenyatta struck a balance between public health measures and economic considerations, introducing focused assistance for vulnerable groups and affected sectors. Kenyatta was steadfast in emphasizing economic recovery while recognizing the repercussions of the pandemic. Magufuli may not have appreciated a pragmatic approach such as the one tailored by Kenyatta. He instead gave precedence to economic activity over public health measures, contending that lockdowns would severely impact the economy. This approach prompted concerns about finding a balance between economic considerations and the associated public health risks.

In 2021, President John Pombe Magufuli imposed restrictions on Kenyan businesses accessing the Tanzanian market, including a ban on dairy companies and limitations on the

export of unprocessed goods from Kenya (Thiong'o, 2021). These cross-border issues with truck drivers escalated and had a significant influence on Tanzania's economy, affecting food supply, and other necessities. The diplomatic tension was brought about by a policy dispute between Kenya and Tanzania on how to handle cross-border migration. Tanzania had a disproportionately strong response to Kenya's decision to prohibit non-cargo movement across the country's border with Tanzania and to mandate all truck drivers from Tanzania to present a Covid-free certificate. Tanzania demanded a complete ban on all border movement from Kenya. The issues persisted even after they had been substantially rectified (Barack, & Munga, 2021; Wekesa, 2020). This stood in contrast to the intervention meant to mitigate the significant impacts of the pandemic on various crucial economic and social aspects of the EAC region, including Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) (EAC 2020, pg. 12. No. v).

Leadership style

Another distinction is evident in their leadership styles. Kenyatta on the one hand adopted a more collaborative and consultative approach. He put together a legal and technical sound board by working with experts and the public to develop and implement COVID-19 strategies. He communicated regularly and transparently about the pandemic (Nasubo, Nyakwaka & Kali 2022). On the other hand, Magufuli played his hand close to his chest. He displayed a more authoritarian leadership style, downplaying expert advice and criticism. Bamwenda (2018) asserts that Magufuli's lack of transparency and communication around COVID-19 raised concerns. He framed COVID-19 as a war and not a health calamity requiring scientific consultation. He was a president who always took an idiosyncratic view of leadership. Having been elected in 2015, he acted unilaterally. This consolidation of power through the presidency ultimately divided Tanzania. Kwayu (2020) posits that even Magufuli's ruling party, Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM), had become a casualty of his autocratic style of leadership.

The divergent approaches to leadership and policymaking regarding the COVID-19 pandemic by the respective Heads of State illustrated above have underscored the critical role of political leadership in shaping responses to public health crises. Magufuli's scepticism

towards conventional public health measures and his insistence on downplaying the severity of the pandemic contrast sharply with Kenyatta's more proactive and science-driven approach.

Implications of the EAC's COVID-19 Pandemic on Kenya and Tanzania Foreign Policy

The COVID-19 pandemic exerted significant influence upon the dynamics within EAC. The application of EAC's COVID-19 Response plan was met by many challenges. The ramifications of this global health crisis were perceptibly manifested across various dimensions encompassing healthcare cooperation, regulatory measures at national borders, mobility infrastructure, commercial interactions, and the fabric of international political relations.

Firstly, while implementing the EAC's COVID-19 response plan there was a challenge in the coordination of testing and vaccination campaigns. Kenya and Tanzania had different testing and vaccination strategies, and this has made it difficult to coordinate their efforts. Kenya for instance focused on mass testing, while Tanzania focused on targeted testing leading to confusion and frustration among the people of both countries (Bigirimana, Rwagasore, & Condo, 2021; Jireh & Nzau, 2022). Tanzania eventually stopped implementing the EAC response plan a few months after its rollout (Gesami, 2022). Tanzania's choice to discontinue executing the response also had an effect on how Tanzania was viewed internationally because it received criticism from all over the world. The absence of Tanzania's cooperation in sharing data undermines the precision of statistics originating from this geographical area (Tanui 2020; Wasike 2020). This prevented an accurate assessment of the pandemic's effects and hindered the region's ability to make informed decisions. The withdrawal also undermined the EAC's collaborative approach, thus jeopardizing the effectiveness of regional measures in addressing the challenges posed by the epidemic. This inconsistency could also have disrupted the coherence of coordinated regional actions and put a strain on trust and cooperation among EAC member states. The differing approaches to addressing the COVID-19 situation in Kenya and Tanzania led to tension within the EAC's regional integration.

Secondly, Kenya and Tanzania faced challenges in implementing joint border controls. The two countries having different border security agencies made it difficult to coordinate their

efforts. For example, Kenya has a more militarized border security force, while Tanzania has a more civilian-based border security force. Such inconsistency allowed individuals to bypass stricter measures by traveling through a less restricted route without undergoing proper screening or quarantine. This created a potential loophole for infected individuals to enter a country undetected and contribute to the spread of the virus within the community (Jireh & Nzau, 2022; Zgovu, 2021).

The EAC's regional initiatives, such as its One-Stop Border Points (OSBPs), which merge two stops from neighbouring countries into one, were hampered by the execution of uneven measures. The governments' requirement that truck drivers undergo testing at the entry and departure points before travelling to their destination weakened the OSBPs. Truckers had to wait more than 10 days to be inspected or given the all-clear to enter another nation, which led to lengthy traffic bottlenecks. Truck drivers were obligated to undergo mandatory examinations at exit and entry checkpoints which resulted in a standoff between the borders of Kenya and Tanzania. After President Uhuru Kenyatta called President Magufuli on the phone, bilateral discussions arose as a result of the increased tension. Even though they had agreed to settle the boundary dispute, the two nations criticized each other for not upholding the Memorandum of Understanding (Nasubo, Nyakwaka & Kali 2022).

A collective declaration issued by the Ministers of Health from the EAC in March 2020 which resolved to facilitate the free movement of goods and services in the region, was disregarded by Tanzania. This contravened one of the target intervention measures by the EAC that stated that there should be "regional coordination of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic to facilitate the movement of goods and services" (EAC 2020, p. 12. iv). These varying responses highlighted the gaps in the EAC integration process that already existed such as the Kenya–Tanzania cross-border trade disputes (Harrington & Ngira, 2021).

Thirdly, when Kenya took swift action by shutting its airports to tourists, Tanzania did not enact such measures. Tanzania's leadership under President John Magufuli showed less regard for the scientific recommendations embraced by other nations. Instead, Magufuli opted for traditional remedies and religious supplications in place of vaccines (Oloruntoba,

2021; Zgovu, 2021). The decision to suspend tourist arrivals through airport closures had divergent implications for Tanzania and Kenya. Tanzania, by receiving a higher number of tourists during the pandemic, managed to sustain limited operational continuity within its tourist and hospitality sector. In contrast, Kenya experienced adverse effects due to reduced tourist inflow, signifying an economic setback. This disparity highlights the intricate interdependence of the EAC member states in terms of shared airports and the tourism industry, potentially impacting the region's integration efforts (Chenyambuga & Mneney, 2022).

Fourthly, commercial activities were majorly affected. In 2021, cross-border problems with truck drivers had a significant influence on the nation's economy, food supply, and other necessities. Diplomatic tension was brought on by a policy dispute between Kenya and Tanzania about how to handle cross-border migration. Tanzania had a disproportionately strong response to Kenya's decision to forbid non-cargo movement across the country's border with Tanzania and to require all truckers from Tanzania to present a COVID-free certificate. Tanzania demanded a complete ban on all border movement from Kenya. The issues persisted even after they had been substantially rectified (Barack, & Munga, 2021; Wekesa, 2020). This was in opposition to the intervention that was supposed to lessen the fundamental effects of the pandemic on the different important economic and social sectors of the EAC region including Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) (EAC 2020, pg. 12. No. v).

Therefore, despite the efforts to ensure flourishing trade relations among EAC member states, occasional and regular disputes strained Kenya-Tanzania bilateralism. The exclusion of Tanzania from Kenya's list of the first batch of phased resumption of international flights allowed into Kenya elicited another diplomatic bilateral tension. Tanzania responded by revoking air and landing authorization for Kenya Airways "until further notice" (Al Jazeera, 2020). The facilitation of a coordinated and coherent implementation of priority initiatives that would aid in short-term economic recovery was infringed upon (EAC 2020, p.12. vi). While the regional plan had the goal of establishing a unified and effectively coordinated approach to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, it was hampered by disunity especially

between Kenya and Tanzania given the aforementioned historic differences and the differences in the conceptualization of the pandemic. This inevitably led to non-conventional methods of prevention and suppression of the virus mainly on the part of Tanzania.

Therefore, while Magufuli's approach may have initially garnered support from some quarters, the eventual consequences, including high infection rates and strained healthcare systems, raised questions about the efficacy of such leadership styles in the face of a global health crisis. Conversely, Kenyatta's more cautious and collaborative approach, although facing its own set of challenges, demonstrated the importance of evidence-based decision-making and international cooperation in mitigating the effects of the pandemic. The lessons learned from the contrasting experiences of Tanzania and Kenya serve as valuable insights into the complexities of leadership during times of crisis.

In March 2021, President Suluhu Hassan ascended to power in Tanzania. In order to reconsider the nation's response to COVID-19, a special group of health professionals was formed. Tanzania adopted an open policy to execute well-recognized COVID-19 containment measures as advised by the nation's specialists. Additional recommendations included that Tanzania executes regional and international pandemic resolutions made by regional blocs and the World Health Organization and engage effectively in decision-making (Odula, 2021).

A meeting held between President Samia Suluhu Hassan of Tanzania and the former President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya in May 2021 saw both nations sought to re-establish amicable relations (African News, 2021). The preceding period had been marred by heightened tensions as Kenya and Tanzania exchanged accusations of engaging in inequitable economic practices during President Magufuli's administration (Harrington and Ngira 2021). The objective of the meeting was to arrive at a mutually agreeable resolution concerning cross-border commerce, non-tariff barriers, and, most significantly, the management of the Covid-19 pandemic (African News, 2021).

The May 2021 meeting between the two heads of state concluded with proposals on a series of measures to eliminate over 14 non-tariff barriers in the shortest time possible (Ambani,

2022). This improved relationship between Kenya and Tanzania is the reason for the significant rise in bilateral trade. According to data from the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), Kenya's imports from Tanzania more than doubled to Ksh20.5 billion (\$182.6 million) in 2021, while Tanzania's increased from Ksh10.8 billion (\$96.2 million). Goods shipped to Tanzania, on the other hand, increased from Ksh14 billion (\$124.7 million) to Ksh17.8 billion (\$158.6 million) (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2010).

Lastly, foreign policy behaviour towards the pandemic varied across partner states of the EAC. The level of integration of a region can be gauged by how effectively member nations collaborate as a unified entity in addressing both external challenges and in formulating responses to entities beyond their union, including both governmental and non-governmental actors (Ramadhani, 2023). However, this ideal scenario has not been fully realized within the EAC framework. The emergence of the COVID-19 crisis underscored instances of disunity among partner states, revealing a lack of cohesive action and a common approach to the challenges posed by the pandemic.

The frictions existing between Kenya and Tanzania impeded the progress of integration within the EAC across dimensions encompassing political, societal, and economic cooperation. Consequently, the repercussions extended to fellow partner states, notably impacting trade dynamics, the facilitation of cross-border movement of goods and people, and the utilization of jointly shared infrastructure, such as airports. While the diplomatic dialogues conducted by the respective Heads of State of these two countries may have contributed to a certain degree of amelioration in their relations, it is imperative to acknowledge that sustained integration requires multifaceted efforts beyond this. The theoretical framework of new regionalism underscores the necessity for integration mechanisms that transcend the confines of national boundaries, and such considerations become particularly pertinent in instances of this nature.

Conclusion

The foundation of Kenya's foreign policy conduct is rooted in the guidelines delineated in the 2014 Kenya Foreign Policy framework. Beyond safeguarding national sovereignty and

territorial boundaries, this policy framework endeavours to foster integration, bolster peace and security, and propel the economic advancement of both Kenya and its populace. This aligns harmoniously with the principles outlined in Article 5 of the EAC Treaty of 2000, which primarily seeks to propel the progression of the regional integration. However, while promoting regional integration and abiding by WHO guidelines for COVID-19, the EAC's response plan did expose existing gaps in the region's integration process, such as the Kenya-Tanzania boundary disputes and trade disparities. The conceptualisation of the COVID-19 pandemic by the individual Heads of States of Kenya and Tanzania resulted in differing strategic responses leading to strained relations between the two states, a situation that impacted the EAC integration process.

The EAC should draw lessons from this encounter and proactively ready itself for potential future contingencies by meticulously orchestrating its strategic blueprints. It is imperative to acknowledge and embrace the ideological disparities existing among the EAC partner states while concurrently upholding the autonomy of each state and engaging in collective endeavours concerning regional affairs. This necessity arises from the observation that the strains observed in the bilateral relations between Kenya and Tanzania also stem from internal dynamics within the partner states, notably their inability to collaborate effectively during periods of adversity.

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