

# Nature of Security Cooperation and Regional Integration within the Jurisdiction of the East African Community

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## Abstract

Regional integration has allowed member states of regional blocs to cooperate in security matters within their jurisdictions to protect their territories, sovereignty, and interests from imminent threats. The Partner States of the East African Community (EAC) have made tacit attempts at security cooperation in a bid to mitigate the security threats but this has not always borne fruit. The study therefore sought to investigate the nature of security cooperation and regional integration within the EAC. It was guided by the Regional Security Complex Theory and employed a mixed method approach, to collect data from 141 accessible respondents. The respondents comprised policy makers and technocrats within the EAC partner states, the EAC Secretariat, Ministries responsible for both Foreign and EAC Affairs in the capital cities of all Partner States, High Commissions and Embassies of partner states resident in Kenya, and EACs Development Partners and Collaborating Organizations with regional offices in Nairobi. Data collection was done via structured interviews, structured questionnaires and review of publications and reports. The data was analysed using process tracing. It was established that the EAC region has overlapping security threats that have adverse economic, political and social effects on the region. These security threats require the collective and cooperative action of the Partner States under the coordination of the EAC Secretariat. The onus, therefore, is on the Partner States to harmonize their national laws and adhere to the guiding legal and institutional provisions of the treaty establishing the EAC.

**Keywords:** Security Cooperation, Regional Integration, East African Community

## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Background to the study

Regional integration involves the coming together of two or more states, usually through reciprocal preferential arrangements. It happens in five progressive stages namely; a free trade area, customs union, common market, and monetary union and finally a political integration (ECB, 2009). The European Union (EU) transcended these stages since its inception in 1957 and is now the only regional organization with the institutional capacity responsible for governance, trade, monetary policies and social welfare (Cameron, 2010). On its part, the African Union (AU) is a continental regional organization comprising eight sub regional blocs that were created mainly for economic purposes (UNECA, 2017b). The East African Community (EAC) was initially formed in 1967 by Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania but collapsed in 1977. It was re-established in 1999. In 2007, Burundi and Rwanda joined the Community, and in 2016, South Sudan joined.

Although the region currently boasts of relatively stable economies, vast territory and a large population it is plagued by the problem of conflict and insecurity that it must actively tackle. Toward this end, the EAC has developed a Strategy for Regional Peace and Security (SRPS) that spells out the areas of cooperation for the Community in a bid to ensure peace and security in the broader East Africa region (EAC, 2013). The SRPS is an ambitious undertaking that could drive the EAC regional security agenda and bond it together as a political federation capable of resolving its conflict and safety related issues, as enshrined in the EAC Treaty. This study therefore examines the nature of security cooperation and regional integration within the EAC.

### 1.2 Statement of the problem

The adoption of the SRPS in 2006 aimed at identifying regional security issues and finding avenues to address violent conflict and insecurity challenges as a unified entity. However, in the recent past, the East African Region has hosted over 2.4 million refugees and about 7.3 million internally displaced persons (OCHA, 2014) owing to the numerous conflicts experienced that have increased in number and become more sophisticated. This situation points to the likelihood that the EAC's policy-making institutions lack the capacity to adequately advise, inform and persuade the Partner States to develop an outward-looking policy that will ensure regional peace and security that would have a significant impact on the desired form of integration. Thus, the study sought to establish how the EAC could build synergy in security matters to promote and sustain its regional integration agenda.

### 1.3 Objective of the study

The specific objective of the study was to investigate the nature of security cooperation and regional integration within the jurisdiction of the East African Community.

## 2.0 Literature Review

### 2.1 Nature of security cooperation and regional integration

The premise of security cooperation in regional blocs is the ability to counter the security threats and issues that may arise. Regional security arrangements formed for this purpose vary from one region to another and have different mandates, designed to respond to the security needs challenges and concerns of their members (Kegley and Raymond, 2005). For instance, the European Union was able to manage the divergent interests of its member states and transform the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) framework into the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) (EU, 2003). In line with article 3(f) of its Constitutive Act, the African Union (AU) aims at promoting peace, security, and stability in Africa through its Africa Peace and Security Architecture (APSA).

The APSA facilitates and coordinates efficient and timely responses to crises and conflicts in Africa through sub-regional arrangements dubbed 'African Standby Forces' (ASF) that are prepared to provide peace support operations in times of conflict (Moolakkatou, 2010). The EAC was initially formed for purposes of economic integration. However, its scope broadened after the 1993 Treaty of East African Cooperation and the establishment of a Tripartite Commission for Cooperation (Nyakwaka, 2007). After the resuscitation of the East African Community in 1999, several initiatives were taken to improve the security situation in the region. For instance, a Protocol on Peace and Security was established in 2013 to identify regional security issues and find avenues to address violent conflict and insecurity challenges.

Bailes and Cottey, (2006) identify models of regional security cooperation that can help in understanding the nature, prospects, and their limitations. However, these models are relatively static and do not explain why regional groups such as EAC change their membership or agenda. This study fills the existing gap by evaluating the dynamics that inform member states to adopt changes in security cooperation in regional integration within the jurisdiction of the EAC. In their analysis of security cooperation in African regional blocs, scholars tend to focus on the state as a rational actor in the international system. For example, Tavares (2011) emphasizes that national interests inform security cooperation efforts through peacekeeping efforts. This study used the regional bloc as the rational actor that facilitates or mandates its members to participate in security cooperation, thereby filling a theoretical gap in the existing literature.

### 2.2 Theoretical framework

In a multilateral set up such as the East African Community, security cooperation is vital for the good of all members. Thus, the Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) to the study stimulates an inquest into how Africans, through regional integration, can build synergy in security matters despite the pre-existing dynamics in their respective jurisdictions. The RSCT facilitated empirical studies to give meaning to why states in a region prefer cooperation on matters of security as opposed to security competition and establish theory-based scenarios from the known physical forms and alternatives to Regional Security Complexes (Buzan, 1991). It fronts the regional level of analysis in the international system (Buzan and Wæver, 2003). There are four levels of analysis that inform the theory: local level dynamics and their influence on the region; state-to-state relations which form the RSC; region-to-region relationships especially with adjacent ones; and the role of global powers in RSCs.

According to the theory, regional complexes are dynamic and can change form from one to another depending on world events (Stone, 2009). Also, patterns of security and insecurity in a region are an eclectic mix of history, political and material conditions present in the regions. States use these conditions to define the amity-enmity power relations between them. For example, the Francophone-Anglophone divide in the West African conflicts (Hough, 2007) provides a clear example where the wars and rivalries of the former colonies permeate into the neighbouring states with a diverse colonial background.

Buzan and Wæver (2003) contend that the international system should not only focus on the most influential actors in the global arena but should instead pay particular attention to the most powerful actor in any given region. In the EAC case, there have been divergent views and debates regarding the strongest actor in the region and the influence this actor wields in the region. Also, the security complex of the EAC has a bearing on its primary goal of becoming a political federation albeit the security dynamics. Because security cannot easily be separated from its regional neighbours, securitized issues within the Community heighten tensions between its partners fanning the amity-enmity relationship. Examples of the complex relationships are the controversial EAC- EU EPA, the Coalition of the Willing (COW) in development issues, tensions between Rwanda and Burundi over the recent political crisis in Burundi. Thus the regional security complex of the EAC has a direct influence on its current and future integration aspirations.

## 3.0 Research Methodology

The study employed the mixed method approach. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used concurrently. However, the study was highly qualitative. The study was carried out in multiple sites within the jurisdiction of the EAC. These sites include the EAC headquarters in Arusha, Tanzania and the Ministries

charged with Foreign Affairs as well as EAC Affairs in the capital cities of five Partner States, namely, Bujumbura, Dar es Salaam, Kampala, Kigali and Nairobi. Other study sites were the High Commissions and Embassies of Partner States resident in Kenya and EACs development partners and collaborating organizations with regional offices in Nairobi.

The targeted population of the study consisted of a predetermined number of respondents who comprised specific groups of people in institutions dealing with regional security and who advocate for cooperation in security matters. These were policy makers as well as technical experts in the fields of peace and security, international relations and regional integration within the EAC Partner States and the EAC Secretariat. Experts from the Community's development partners and other collaborating organizations based in Nairobi, and Ambassadors and High Commissioners domiciled in Nairobi were also targeted.

The study employed both probability and non-probability sampling procedures in identifying the respondents. Probability sampling method adopted was stratified sampling, where the total sample size was 136 respondents. For non-probability sampling, the study also employed homogenous purposive sampling, where 5 respondents in the homogenous study population were sampled. The study collected primary data using semi structured interviews guides and questionnaires.

To test validity, the researcher undertook a pilot study at the Kenya Foreign Service Academy, while the reliability of the research instruments was tested through the test-retest technique. Triangulation of data was also done. For data analysis, the qualitative raw data underwent transcription, categorization into themes and key concepts, reduction into homogeneous groups and process tracing. Quantitative data were processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 20.0 and presented using percentages, pie charts, and tables.

#### **4.0 Findings and Discussions**

To address the study objective on the nature of security cooperation and regional integration within the jurisdiction of the EAC, the study first assesses the security dynamics in the region and went on to establish the interplay between security cooperation and regional integration.

##### *4.1 Security dynamics in the EAC*

The study established that the community is characterized by several security dynamics that influence the resolution of the Partner States to cooperate in security matters. These dynamics are discussed under four themes: Porous borders, political instability, negative ethnicity, and the cycle of violence.

###### *4.1.1 Porous borders*

It emerged that the porous borders also allow for the free flow of illegal arms, counterfeit goods, auto theft, human trafficking and other criminal activities within the region that exacerbate the insecurity in the region mainly through the illegal routes commonly known as '*panya*' routes (rat routes). These routes are usually created by border communities that were divided during colonial times, who often cross over to either side of the border through both the designated border points and the illegal routes, for trade purposes, pasture for their animals, water and other reasons (Isoke, 2015). The study also found out that the porous borders allow for an influx of refugees from the conflict areas like Darfur, Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, and Somalia into the region. Mogire, (2011) argues that refugees are almost always accompanied by armed elements within the refugee camps who pose a threat to both national and regional stability and cooperation because it is difficult to distinguish the genuine refugees from the militia. Thus, the refugees are often viewed as a source of insecurity.

A critical analysis of the respondents' views on refugees shows that refugees are viewed as diplomatic burdens and political irritants. Their arrival is therefore met with resistance, and in some cases, violence erupts against them. The result is that refugee issues are over-securitised and generate a lot of debate containing ethnic and xenophobic undertones especially during the electioneering period. If left unchecked, the over- securitisation will serve to strain relations within the Community, particularly when Partner States begin to accuse each other of sabotage, as it did in the 1990s between Tanzania and Burundi (Niklaus and Loescher, 2003) and in 2015 between Burundi and Rwanda (Basabose, 2015).

###### *4.1.2 Political instability*

The study established that political instability in the EAC region affects security cooperation and regional integration negatively. It emerged that the internal political wrangles in the Partner States portray the region in a negative light. For example, in 2007, about one thousand five hundred people lost their lives and over six hundred thousand displaced in post-election violence in Kenya (Juma, 2009). In 2017, over forty people were reportedly killed in election-related violence (Abdi, 2017). As an institution, the EAC has a limited track record in peace and security (Elowson and Albuquerque, 2015) as its political leaders have often sought to avoid the EAC's involvement in their internal political affairs. Instead, the leaders resort to settling conflictual issues amongst themselves without involving the relevant institutions of the EAC. The efforts of the EAC technocrats are thus complicated. The EAC, for instance, took no role in the negotiation for peace in Burundi 2015 or South

Sudan in 2012. The fact that the EAC cannot influence member states' politics, these divisions are likely to paralyze the ability for EAC to act decisively on issues related to peace and security.

#### 4.1.3 Negative ethnicity

The study established that negative ethnicity has its roots in colonialism, causes ethnic profiling, stereotyping and tensions that may also be entrenched in the governance structures of the Partner States. This occurrence led some ethnic groups to feel marginalized by the structural violence and inspired periodic agitation for change. Many times this agitation is countered with force and violence erupts, causing the region to be insecure. The EAC region has been dogged by negative ethnicity that has led to conflicts. The worst of the conflicts occurred in Rwanda in 1994. Burundi has had four episodes of ethnic cleansing in 1965, 1972, 1988 and 1993 (Isabirye and Mahmoudi, 2000). In Kenya, negative ethnicity is tied to elections since 1992. The deeply seeded animosities remain unresolved, and as such, they often recur (Juma, 2009). In Uganda, intolerant behaviour and exclusion have been a source of tension between ethnic groups and the state. For example, the issue of Buganda in Uganda created tension between the Baganda ethnic group and the state, and the conflict between the Bakiga and Banyoro in Kibaale brought inter-ethnic tensions (Nyombi and Kaddu, 2015). Negative ethnicity has not been a major issue in Tanzania when compared to the rest of the Partner States of the Community. In the recent past, however, there have been indications of religious tensions between Christians and Muslims, and between the indigenous communities and the Asian Tanzanians presumably over the latter's business prowess (Tetti, 2014).

#### 4.1.4 Cycle of violence

The study found out that the conflicts within the EAC region have social, economic and political innuendos. For instance, there is a class of people that benefit from the violence within the regional societies. These people fuel and fan the violence for their profit at the expense of others. The benefits gained are mostly economic and political and this contributes to the levels of stability of the region (Mathieson, 2016). It was established that the genesis of some of the disputes dates to pre-colonial times, where communities would carry out raids on each other for various reasons. During the colonial period, the divide and rule system created tensions among some communities that still play out today. The newly independent EAC states except Tanzania were unable to unify the communities under their territories and the tensions that existed during the colonial period continued. Present day politics has continued to instigate violence (Cooksey, 2016). The situation is heightened by the dwindling natural resources that the people compete for, the lack of employment opportunities, poor service provision by the governments and availability of small arms and light weapons. The EAC therefore needs to find a lasting solution that would bring an end to the cycle of violence especially politically instigated conflicts, border conflicts, and resource-based conflicts.

#### 4.2 The Interplay between security cooperation and regional integration within the jurisdiction of the EAC

The study investigated the relationship between security cooperation and regional integration. In so doing, the respondents were first asked to mention the factors that contribute to security cooperation within the EAC. The factors that were mentioned were grouped into three broad themes: EAC leadership (30), EACs priorities and practices (63) and the existing institutional mechanism for security cooperation within the Community (48). These responses are summarised in Figure 1.

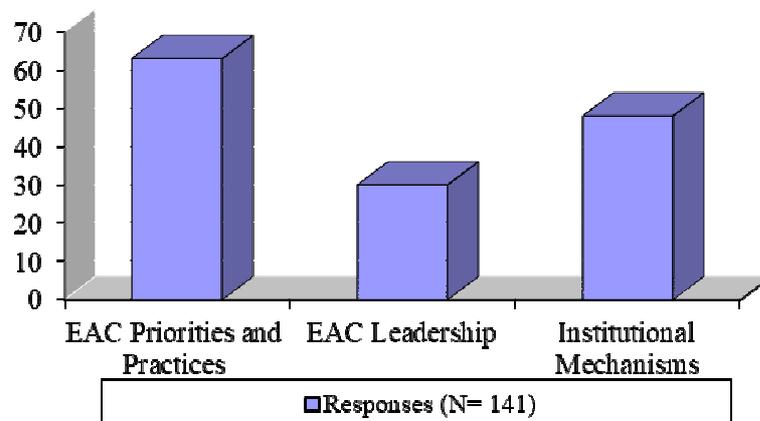


Figure 1. Factors contributing to security cooperation in the EAC  
 Source: Field Data, 2017.

##### 4.2.1 EAC leadership

The study established that the EAC Secretariat played an integral role in mobilizing the Partner States to commit to cooperation in security matters. The sharing of information had enabled the states to reduce cases of insecurity

propagated by threats such as piracy, trade in illicit weapons, drug trafficking, cattle rustling and motor vehicle theft, which attests to the time, effort and resources that have been mobilized for security cooperation. However, it was argued that the security cooperation is poorly coordinated by the EAC Secretariat that is ill-equipped in terms of expertise, funding, and assets required for performing its duties adequately. The study identified the lack of a clear hegemon to provide leadership in the region as a factor contributing to the current security situation.

The void in leadership leads to disunity in some instances and the lack of consensus and effective coordination in the approaches taken by the Community to address pertinent security issues that affect the region. Further, the study contends that the EAC Partner States should cede some element of state power to the Community to allow it to spearhead the regional security agenda. The pooled resources would facilitate the Community as a regional actor in the global arena to have a higher impact in the drive to mitigate security concerns that plague the region. However, states are obsessed with power and demand the centre stage insecurity related decision making.

#### *4.2.2 EAC priorities and practices*

The study established that EAC lays more emphasis on economics and economic development as opposed to security. Thus, more resources are dedicated to facilitate the Community's economic growth and development agenda. For instance, the resources committed to the customs union and the common market is more than that allocated to peace and security activities, as evidenced in the annual budgetary allocations of the Community. Mwasha (2011) argues that integration grounded on the security premise is likely to be more profound than one on economics. Therefore, the political leaders of the Partner States ought to recognise the EAC as a security actor. As the regional security actor, the EAC ought to determine the classification of the security concerns within its jurisdiction as regional or national. However, the current practice is that the Partner States determine the actions of the Community, and often plead state sovereignty and non-interference in their domestic affairs.

The EAC has therefore been unable to regulate, direct and offer guidance to its Partner States when any of them decides to securitise an issue. Mays (2003) argues that generally, international organizations in Africa lack sovereignty in the political arena and are thus, dependent on their state parties for agenda setting, and the activities they undertake. On its part, the study argues that, ideally, the onus of handling internationalised conflicts and transnational security threats should be on the EAC as an institution. With the EAC at the core, there would be appropriate securitization and guidance for the Partner States in making proportionate contributions to the funding of the security sector at the regional level thus facilitating a regional response to security matters.

#### *4.2.3 Institutional mechanisms for security cooperation within the EAC*

Article 9 of the EAC Treaty gives the Community powers to establish institutions and organs to run the Community's affairs independently from its member (EAC, 2002). That notwithstanding, the EAC has taken several steps in a bid to enhance peace and security in the region under its jurisdiction to activate a model for regional security within the broader continental context (Moolakkatou, 2010). Also, the Partner States signed into existence, several protocols on security which have made attempts at implementing them. The key protocols on security are the SRPS was adopted in 2006 to foster peace and security and provides strategies for the fulfilment of each of the goals (Kiraso, 2009) and a Protocol on Peace and Security developed in 2013 to implement the goals of the SRPS (EAC, 2013). The EAC also developed a Protocol on Foreign Policy Coordination was developed in 2010 premised on the communities' fundamental principles of 'and a Protocol on Cooperation in Defence in 2012 that operationalized Article 124 of the Treaty for the Establishment of the EAC (Kamau, 2013).

The Community has been working with other regional organizations and friendly governments around the world to strengthen its institutions. It has entered into several collaborative agreements with other Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and Regional Mechanisms (RM) (Kiraso, 2009). These include MOUs with Eastern and Southern Africa Anti-Money Laundering Group (ESAAMLG); and with Regional Centre on Small Arms (RECSA). The EAC has also agreed to cooperate with INTERPOL in the fight against transnational crimes; and signed an MOU with International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) promoting peace and security, democracy and good governance.

## **5.0 Summary, Conclusion, Recommendations And Suggestions For Further Research**

### *5.1 Summary of findings*

The study established that the four key dynamics exuberate security in the region. These are: porous borders, political instability, negative ethnicity, and the cycle of violence. Porous borders allow for the free flow of illegal arms, counterfeit goods, auto theft, human trafficking and other criminal activities within the region. Political instability manifest through internal political wrangles affects security cooperation and regional integration negatively. Negative ethnicity which has its roots in colonialism causes ethnic profiling, stereotyping and tensions that may also be entrenched in the governance structures of the Partner States. The cycle of violence is

backed by social, economic and political innuendos. This makes the beneficiaries continue to fan violence in the region.

On the relationship between security cooperation and regional integration, the study established that the three key factors that contribute to security cooperation within the EAC are leadership (30), EACs priorities and practices (63) and the existing institutional mechanism for security cooperation within the Community (48).

### 5.2 Conclusion

The study concluded that security cooperation occurs albeit minimally and is therefore more idealistic than realistic. Also, the Partner States' rationale for adopting an inward-looking approach to security cooperation, further serves to complicate the security dynamics within the region. Thus, the EAC as a regional organization is placed in a precarious position. By and large, the state will continue to be perceived as a rational actor in the international system whose interests will always supersede those of other actors.

### 5.3 Recommendations

The study recommends that regional security within the Community should be viewed not from the interest-based lenses of power theories, but through the identity-based lenses, that are rooted in the constructivist Regional Security Complex (RSC) point of view. Also, the EAC should expedite the harmonisation of the national security policies of the Partner States into a robust regional security policy. This action would enhance the scope and functions of the Community's institutional mechanisms. It would also make them adaptable to the new and emerging security threats that affect the region and the Partner States therein. To improve the functionality of the mechanisms, the researcher recommends the inception of an overarching regional security framework or structure. Such a framework will influence the process of consultation and confidence building among the Partner States.

### 5.4 Suggestions for further research

The study suggests that there should be further research into the development and institutionalisation of a functional security governance structure. Research in this area would provide a solid foundational basis for either upgrading the peace and security department or the constitution of a new body with an enhanced mandate and enforcement power.

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