

# Why did regional integration fail in East Africa in the 1970s? A historical explanation

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## Abstract

*The inauguration of the East African Community (EAC) in 2001 as an intergovernmental organisation brought the subject of regional integration in East Africa back in the lime-light. While this was correctly deemed a commendable move which showed the dexterity of the East African political leadership, the incident simultaneously invoked the pertinent question: why did the first EAC that was established in 1967 collapse in 1977? A secondary question could be phrased thus: how will the current organisation survive? This paper addresses the first question from a historical perspective and also gives pointers as to how the secondary question could be answered. To achieve this goal, the paper draws from archival sources and other source types to piece together a concrete explanation for the demise of the first EAC. Among the sources used are parliamentary debates which took place in the House of Commons and House of Lords in Britain, debates which took place in the East Africa Legislative Assembly, as well as debates which took place in the national parliaments of Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika (Tanzania). Secondary sources in the form of books, journal articles and newspaper articles are also used to augment the sources listed above. The key argument made in the paper is that the reasons for the eventual collapse of the first EAC can be traced back to the social, political and economic situations under which the organisation was established. Importantly, the paper concludes that a confluence of factors should be blamed for the demise of this organisation and that agency cannot be confined to either British or East African role-players. On the contrary, actors from each constituency individually and collectively contributed to the eventual collapse of the EAC. The paper concludes by making recommendations on how the current organisation could evade some of the earlier hurdles.*

**Keywords:** East Africa, East African Community, history, intergovernmental organisation, regional integration.

## Introduction

Since the 1990s, there has been a move towards embracing regionalism as a viable economic and political means of bringing countries together. This practice is premised on the understanding that such efforts *inter alia* enhance economic growth, lessen border conflicts and reduce competition among countries which sometimes results into animosities with detrimental effects on national and continental progress. From that vantage point, regional integration is a viable and necessary activity which contributes to global peace and stability. Within Africa, the eight regional economic

communities recognized by the African Union (AU) are: (1) Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD); (2) Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA); (3) East African Community (EAC); (4) Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS); (5) Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS); (6) Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD); (7) Southern African Development Community (SADC); and (8) Arab Maghreb Union (UMA) (UNECA, 2012).

The key question is: why are AU Heads of States pursuing regional integration despite the fact that similar attempts in the past have failed in different parts of the African continent? A quick answer to this question is that African countries see this as a development strategy. They want to establish Regional Economic Communities (RECs) which would later form an African Economic Community (AEC) in the distant future. It was against this background that the AU Summit at its 18<sup>th</sup> Assembly which was convened in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in January 2012 resolved to fast-track the establishment of an African Free Trade Area (FTA) by 2017 to boost intra-African trade. Such enthusiasm forces us to go back in history to see similar efforts that were made in different parts of Africa in order to draw some lessons and evade problems that would see us falling in the same trap as predecessor regional organisations. It is in this context that the present paper traces the history of the EAC and provides historical explanations as to why this regional body collapsed after only a single decade. The overall aim of the paper is to provide the current African leadership with something they could use as a source of reference when reviving regional integration as a solution to some of Africa's endemic economic ills.

In 1967, the permanent Tripartite Commission for East African Co-operation was formed under the name 'East African Community (EAC)'. This regional body comprised the East African countries of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. The idea was to forge economic integration in the region with prospects of establishing a political union in the long run. But, as shall be seen in the discussion below, this process was never concluded. The EAC collapsed ten years later (in 1977) due to a confluence of factors which form the core of this paper.

Interestingly, on 30 November 1993, more than 15 years after the demise of the EAC, the three East African states signed another Agreement for East African co-operation determined to give regional integration another go. This co-operation officially began on 14 March 1996 with a proviso that it would be upgraded at a later date. On 2 January 1999, the EAC Summit resolved to establish the EAC in its original form by the end of July of the same year. The difference with this envisaged new EAC was that it considered whether time was ripe to expand it so that it could also include countries like Rwanda. Uganda was in favour of this idea but Kenya and Tanzania felt that it was premature to expand this regional body before they could see if it was working. They argued that the most prudent thing to do at the time was for the founding members to revive the EAC, monitor its progress, and

then decide whether it was possible to expand it. The latter view prevailed and the new EAC began its operation with the same number of countries that had constituted the first organisation in 1967.

With this agreement in place, on 1 April 1999 the regional (East African) passport was subsequently launched thus putting into practice what East African leaders had agreed upon. Later in the year (on 30 November 1999), a Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community was signed by these three countries in Arusha, Tanzania. This Treaty came into force on 7 July 2000. The official inauguration of the EAC took place in January 2001. A lot has happened with this organisation since its revival but such a discussion is not part of the present paper which is more historical in nature.

What is evidently clear from this synopsis is that East African countries are determined to work together once again – both for economic and political reasons. At a glance this is commendable. However, such determination invokes two sets of questions which need urgent attention as the continent moves forward in its bid to re-define itself in global politics: (i) why did the first EAC that was established in 1967 collapse in 1977? (ii) How will the current organisation survive? In order to answer both the main and the secondary questions, this paper traces the history of the first EAC and provides historical reasons as to why it collapsed. With that goal accomplished, the paper draws from these historical reasons to provide precautionary measures that the current EAC should take to avoid a repeat of what happened in 1977. This is done with the aim of demonstrating the utilitarian role of history in helping us learn from our past mistakes so that we could make informed decisions on the way forward.

### **A synopsis of the history of regional integration in east Africa to 1967**

The advent of colonialism saw uncoordinated attempts to bring East African territories closer to one another. The beginning of British administration of East Africa in the mid-1890s ignited the idea of a united East Africa. The federation of the East African territories of Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika with the possible inclusion of the Central African territories of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, was for many years “a goal constantly sought by the settlers of these regions and the British Colonial Office” (Kiano, 1959:13). It was Lord Lugard who in 1898 assumed that there would come a time when East African territories would be administered as a single unit. After visiting East Africa, Sir Harry Johnson, Special Commissioner to Uganda, subsequently recommended that the territories of Uganda, Kenya, Zanzibar and British Somaliland had to be placed under one administration (Legum, 1967). This would ensure uniformity and reduce administrative costs.

In line with this idea, a Customs Union comprising Uganda and Kenya was established in 1917. Its aim was to try and bring semblance of synergy in the regional economies. The fruition of this dream

seemed feasible when Tanganyika joined the union ten years later in 1927. But the first phase in the process of consciously and deliberately integrating East African territories was set in motion in 1924 when the British Colonial Office appointed a four-member Commission to look into the matter and make concrete recommendations. The Commission presented its report to the Colonial Office in 1925. It reported *inter alia* that “we found little, if any support in East Africa for the idea of federation and in some quarters we found definite hostility” (Report of the East Africa Commission, 1925). At this moment, the idea of regional integration had not sunk in.

In 1926, the East African Governors held a meeting in Kenya to discuss the future of the region. This marked the first step towards securing better co-operation between the administrations of the East African territories (Report. Future Policy in Regard to Eastern Africa. Cmd.2904, 1927:4). By 1927 the quest for East African regional integration was beginning to gain momentum. A White Paper published during this year emphasized the importance of closer union in East Africa. Subsequently the Hilton Young Commission was appointed to map the way forward. When the Commission presented its report in 1929 it stated *inter alia* that there was an urgent need for the co-ordination of policy on ‘native affairs’ and all matters concerning the relations between natives and immigrants (Report of the Commission on Closer Union of the Dependencies in Eastern and Central Africa, 1929). Subsequent developments culminated in the establishment of the East Africa High Commission (EAHC) on 1 January 1948. The EAHC provided the platform from which East Africans could plan their future.

The 1950s and early 1960s saw a number of developments regarding regional integration in East Africa. In December 1961 the EAHC was replaced by the East African Common Services Organisation (EACSO). The agreement for this change over was published as General notice No.10 of 1962 in the EACSO Gazette of January 1962. The report of the London discussion was published as Colonia Command Paper Number 1433, ‘The Future of the EAHC Services’ (EACSO Annual Report, 1962:1). The EACSO was larger in scope than its predecessor organization. In addition to the services rendered by the EAHC, EACSO took charge of the currency, customs regulations, tariffs, and taxes for the entire East African region thus maintaining its regional outlook.

Noticeably, by the mid-1960s there was a feeling that regional co-operation in East Africa was in danger. However, East African leaders remained optimistic. President Nyerere allayed people’s fears thus: “But there is no reason at all to believe that East African co-operation is about to collapse. It is sustained by our overwhelming will for unity” (Nyerere, 1968: 61). The Treaty of East African Co-operation was signed in Kampala, Uganda on 6 June 1967. Reporting on this incident, the Uganda Argus reported: “the presidents were smiling broadly at the signing, obviously happy with the achievement of the treaty, which was described by observers as a historic occasion for East Africa” (Uganda Argus, 7 June 1967. See also Report of the Working Party on Higher Education in East Africa, 30 January 1969, par.1). This was the treaty which heralded the EAC. Article 1 of the treaty

stated: “By this Treaty the contracting parties establish among themselves an East African Community and, as an integral part of such Community, an East African common Market” (The Treaty of East African Co-operation, 1967). The East African dream was somewhat achieved. But why did the EAC collapse? This is the question to which we now turn.

### **Factors that led to the demise of the EAC**

To understand why the EAC collapsed in 1977 requires that we look at both endogenous and exogenous causal factors. Any attempt to address this question by focusing solely on one of the two extremes would be insufficient at best and misleading at worst.

#### *Exogenous causal factors*

The fact that the idea of regional integration in East Africa was first conceived in Britain at the House of Commons and the House of Lords meant that the EAC was built on a shaky foundation from the start. While it is true that East Africans later embraced the idea of regional integration which would happen on their terms, the fact that the initial idea had come from Britain in order to sustain its hegemony meant that it would not last since such unity was looked at suspiciously by some constituencies in East Africa. Moreover, foreign influence, especially on the build-up to independence and beyond, negatively affected the East African brotherhood. For example, Kenya was assisted by the Western bloc in managing its affairs. Tanzania on the other hand was linked to the Eastern bloc, while Uganda was assisted in particular by the Soviet Union (Potholm, 1979). This meant that any form of union in East Africa would be built on a shaky foundation. This is what the EAC experienced once it was established in 1967.

When relations among the member states of the EAC deteriorated in the 1970s, American and British manufacturers worsened the situation by demanding that their aircrafts which had been used by the region be returned to them unless they were paid the huge amounts they asked for from the East African Airways (EAA). Kenya did not mind the airline closing down because it stood to benefit. Even if the aircrafts were to be divided amongst the three member states, only Kenya had the ability to service them (*Weekly Review*, 7 February 1977: 19-20). After following the development of events closely, Hilary Ng'weno, one of Kenya's newspaper editors, opined: “a speedy process of dismantling what remains of the community is the only way of minimising the human suffering and bitterness which are bound to follow the final demise of the community” (*Weekly Review*, 14 February 1977:4). This view was premised on the understanding that the collapse of the EAA was simply a symptom of rather more serious problems which engulfed the EAC at the time. In a nutshell, his view was that

nothing could save the EAC given the number and nature of the challenges faced by this regional body. Indeed, the EAC eventually succumbed and was dissolved in 1977.

### *Endogenous causal factors*

It is safe to say that the problems that eventually led to the demise of the EAC were deeply ingrained in regional institutions in general (Report of the Commission on Closer Union, 1929. Cmnd. Paper 3234:234). In that sense, the EAC died a slow death; it started falling apart as it was being constituted. Amongst the key causal factors for this demise were sub-nationalisms or national interests. These were displayed in many forms, at different historical moments and in different contexts. A chronological account of how these national interests converged over time to necessitate the dissolution of the EAC will demonstrate the efficacy of each.

#### *(i). Earlier signs of disintegration in East Africa*

The existence of the Kingdom of Buganda in Uganda marked one of the earliest threats to regional integration in East Africa and thus predetermined the fate of the EAC. King Mutesa II did not see his Kingdom as part of Uganda but as a separate political entity. This dated back to the colonial period whereby Buganda had enjoyed a semi-autonomous status. He refused to be included into Uganda and was exiled for this stance (Wiseman, 1991). After Uganda's independence in 1962, the relations between King Mutesa II and President Milton Obote deteriorated to the extent that in 1966 there was a civil war which resulted into the King going into exile in Britain where he died in 1969. By all accounts, such developments threatened the EAC even before it was dully constituted a year later.

This point is given credence by the fact that in 1928 when the Hilton young Commission conducted its investigation in East Africa and in 1931 when the Joint Select Committee conducted its investigations it became clear that East African leaders were thinking in nationalist terms, not in regional terms. This was reflected in the submissions made to these committees (Joint Select Committee on Closer Union in East Africa, 1931, Cols. 550-553).

Tanganyika too did not think in regional terms at this juncture. When the territory's representatives made submissions to the Joint Select Committee they argued that they did not see which benefits would accrue to their territory if it joined a closer union (Ibid., Col. 476). Even Kenya had reservations about the envisaged closer union. However, by 1946 Kenyans were already considering the reality that East African colonies were on the verge of being unified as per the British arrangement (Response from Kenya's Attorney General, 26 June 1946, Kenya National Archives (KNA). CS/2/6/3). National interests continued to dominate East African politics even in the 1950s after the British government had established the EAHC in 1948.

Nationalist interests dominated East African politics during the mid-1950s. This was evidenced in the East Africa Central Legislative Assembly where Members of the regional House regularly put national interests before those of the region. In 1957, Mr. Mulondo, a Member of the House from Uganda, argued that Uganda would embrace regionalism in areas like health and the construction of the East African Railway simply because his territory stood to benefit from those areas, and not in any other (EAHC. Proceedings of the East Africa Central Legislative Assembly. Official Report, Vol. X, No.1, 1957. Cols. 441-442). Such sentiments continued until independence was obtained by the three East African territories in the early 1960s.

*(ii). The effect of the independence euphoria on regionalism*

The discussion thus far has shown that although the EAC was formally constituted in 1967, the cracks in it were already evident even during its formative years. The independence of Tanganyika in 1961, Uganda in 1962 and Kenya in 1963 meant that these countries had the liberty to take different political routes. This marked the second phase in the failure of regional integration in East Africa in which nationalist sentiments prevailed over regional sentiments. For example, during the Council debates in Tanganyika, the Attorney General argued that one way of ensuring uniformity in East Africa was that Tanganyika had to make good policies that could be adopted by the other East African countries (Council Debates (Hansard) Tanganyika Legislative Council. Official Report, 1960. Col. 355). This was a nationalist stance. As one commentator noted, for regional integration to work, all three independent East African governments had to agree on the date, the same way that the bride and the groom would agree (*Mombasa Times*, 7 August 1964). Unfortunately, the three East African territories followed different political routes. Tanganyika moved towards agrarian socialism; Uganda moved towards revolutionary Africanization of its business sector; while Kenya moved towards 'gradual Kenyanization' of its economy (Perl, 1973). These developments cast a spell on the EAC and predetermined its future.

A point worth noting is that by the mid-1960s the rift among East African territories was already evident. For example, in 1965, two years before the official inauguration of the EAC, the Finance Ministers of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda announced that their respective governments had taken a decision to end the East African Currency Board and start preparing for the establishment of separate central banks and national currencies (Report of the East African Currency Board, 1965; Newlyn, 1965). This decision raised questions about the wisdom of establishing the EAC in a region that was already falling apart. Furthermore, the East African political leadership was aware of the status quo. President Nyerere looked at the prevailing situation, followed the on-going debates and conceded: "Ultimately we are not in fact 'East African' leaders, but leaders of states in East Africa; and regional loyalty has sometimes to come second to our national responsibilities" (Proceedings. East Africa Central Legislative Assembly, 1965. See also Iconoclastes [Betwell Ogot], 1968:5).

Interestingly, President Nyerere made vain attempts to allay the fears of those who followed these developments closely and asked: “Why should East African co-operation be endangered because we own our own banks!” (*Nationalist*, 6 March 1967). The problems which dogged regional integration in East Africa are said to have been caused by: (i) the polarization of national development and the perception of unequal gains; (ii) inadequacy of compensatory and corrective measures – a decision taken to rectify the situation above; (iii) ideological differences and the rise of economic nationalism; and (iv) the impact of foreign influence (Ojo, 1985: 159-171).

The discussion thus far gives the impression that the EAC was a stillborn entity; it was bound to collapse given the shaky foundation on which it was built. However, it is still prudent to address the factors that directly contributed to the dissolution of the EAC in 1977.

### **Factors which led to the demise of the EAC in the 1970s**

#### *(a).The fall of the University of East Africa in 1970*

Several factors were responsible for the eventual demise of the EAC in the 1970s. Among these causal factors was the fact that regional integration was already showing signs of disintegration in other areas, including higher education. One of them was the collapse of the federal University of East Africa (UEA) in June 1970 giving rise to the establishment of national universities in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. A quick discussion of how events unfolded with regards to this regional university will give a better picture of how national interests cast a spell on all efforts to forge regional co-operation in East Africa in the 1970s.

The UEA was dully constituted in June 1963 at a ceremony which took place at the Taifa Hall at the University College in Nairobi with President Julius Nyerere as the first Chancellor. By the time this university was inaugurated, there were already nationalist sentiments that were discernible in many areas. From the start, deciding on what to include in the heraldic device of the envisaged university invoked nationalist sentiments. Each country wanted to be better represented, an objective which could only be achieved at the expense of other member states (Todd, ‘General Comments.’ UON Archives, UEA University Council. PUEA/1A/8). Once in existence, the university started falling apart as nationalist interests prevailed and took precedent over regional interests. These nationalist interests were epitomised *inter alia* by: inequality among the Constituent Colleges of the University, the university calendar, the student population, and sub-nationalism (Mngomezulu, 2007).

Inequality between the constituent colleges is a problem that was anticipated by the De la Warr Commission of 1937 as well as the Working Parties of 1955 and 1958. The issue was also discussed at the National Assemblies of the three East African countries as well as at the East Africa General



Assembly. Makerere was the base of the regional university and therefore had more facilities compared to the other University Colleges in Kenya and Tanzania. As this College continued to develop at the expense of the other two, the academic and political leadership from the two countries became restless and openly expressed their discomfort with the state of affairs. In the end, this would culminate in them making a proposal that the federal university should disband (Minutes of the Provisional Council. PUEA/1A/58, Vol.3).

The university calendar was another area of contestation. The three countries had different academic years and this made it difficult to agree on a common university calendar. In some instances natural factors compounded the problem. For example, long rains between April and June made it difficult for Kenya to agree on the suggested university calendar. Students at the Royal Technical College (RTC) would not be able to do fieldwork during this time due to the reason stated above (Memorandum on Proposals by the Joint Committee. UON Archives. UEA Academic Board. PUEA/3/10 (i); UON Archives. UEA File. PUEA/2B/5). Debates on this issue lingered on to the extent that the calendar for 1969/70 still reflected huge differences among the three University Colleges in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania (UON Archives. UEA Calendar, 1969/70).

The student population presented two sets of problems. In the first instance, there was a small student population in East Africa, not enough to populate the three constituent colleges. This left many spaces unfilled in each academic year (*Daily Nation*, 20 April 1963). Later, the number of students increased significantly to the extent that these colleges could not accommodate all of them. This invoked nationalist interests. Each country wanted to cater for its individual needs without considering how that would affect the other two. In the process, each of the three countries started deviating from agreed upon arrangements in order to satisfy its own needs. Some started questioning the wisdom in retaining this regional arrangement when it was clear that the federal university could not satisfy national needs. Even the presidents of these countries admitted in public that the existing arrangement was untenable (*Uganda Argus*, 2 July 1965).

Nationalism was the key factor which drilled the last nail into the coffin of regional integration in higher education in East Africa. Although East African countries had invoked regional nationalism while fighting their erstwhile colonisers, they now reverted to parochialism and a narrowly-defined form of nationalism. Each of the three East African nations wanted to control its national university (Ajayi, Goma and Johnson, 1996). The opening of the University College in Dar es Salaam three years earlier than the proposed date “naturally called into question concurrent developments in Kampala and Nairobi, given the scarce resources available for higher education” (Southall, 1974:55). In Kenya, Njoroge Mungai, a newly appointed Health Minister, approached the World Health Organisation (WHO) asking for financial assistance to open a Medical School in Nairobi without consulting the authorities of the federal university. Uganda had also shown signs of not respecting the

other two countries. Looking at this situation, Mnjama (1998:7) observed that “it has been argued that the collapse of regional co-operation in East Africa began soon after Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika gained independence.” If this point is anything to go by, it means that nationalism was the driving force behind the demise of the federal University of East Africa.

The discussion above leads to the conclusion that the disintegration of the federal university in 1970 strengthened the case for the dissolution of the EAC. If the three East African countries could not agree on how to work together in the higher education sector, the question was: why would they still try to sustain the life of the EAC? It is in this context, therefore, that I argue that one of the causal factors for the demise of the EAC was the fall of the UEA in 1970.

### **The challenge of sustaining the EAC after the demise of the UEA in 1970**

Political relations in East Africa in the 1970s were not conducive for the sustenance of a regional body. Nationally, in Uganda President Obote and his army General, Idi Amin dada were not in good terms. This culminated in the overthrow of President Obote by Amin in 1971. This incident did not augur well for regional integration (Wiseman, 1991; *Weekly Review*, 15 February 1975). Indeed, there was an observation that the East African Community “has tottered on the brink of collapse ever since the military coup that brought Idi Amin to power” (Mugomba, 1978:268). The negative impact of this incident on the EAC was multi-pronged. In the first instance, Amin was not a signatory of the Declaration of intent to establish the EAC which was signed in June 1963. Invariably, he was not part of the negotiations that led to the formation of the EAC in 1967. As much as the treaty bound Uganda, he did not feel obligated to honour it. Importantly, Amin did not become President through rightful means. Consequently, the presidents of Kenya and Tanzania did not recognize him. The fact that the Baganda Kingdom supported Amin during his coup d'état did not augur well for the survival of the EAC with Uganda as a member.

Ordinarily, Presidents Kenyatta and Nyerere resented Amin (Allen, 2004). The fact that President Nyerere had personal relations with now former President Obote and gave him political asylum in Tanzania meant that he could not work with Amin in the EAC. In fact, he opposed any appointment of Amin into leadership positions in the EAC and refused to convene the meetings of the East African Authority as long as Amin was in power. Subsequent clashes on the Tanzania-Uganda border sounded death knells for the EAC (Van Rensburg, 1981). It is in this context that Garba (1987:124) concludes that one of the major causes of the breaking-up of the EAC was “the personality clash between Nyerere and Idi Amin.” In fact, even President Kenyatta did not embrace Amin. Consequently, “there were constant political squabbles between Kampala and Nairobi and also armed border confrontations” (van Rensburg, 1981:178). When the Organization of African Unity (OAU)

Summit held in Uganda in 1975 recognized Amin as President, both Presidents Nyerere and Kaunda of Zambia boycotted subsequent meetings (Allen, 1972). It was on these grounds that E.M.K. Mulira, a Ugandan MP, argued that the EAC was built on personal relationships which were then infused to the masses. He lamented that East Africans had aimed at building unity from the top and continued, “This is typical of Africans – to build from the top. If we build a federation this way it is bound to fail. We cannot put on a roof without first laying the foundation” (*The Standard Tanzania*, 20 May 1966).

There were other developments which ruled the sustenance of the EAC impossible. One incident was Kenya’s decision to demand more money (200 million shillings) from the East African Airways (EAA) for hosting it on its soil. There was more mud-slinging as a result of these developments. Eventually the EAA was grounded. Coincidentally this happened during the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Arusha Declaration which marked the inauguration of the EAC. As far as Tanzania was concerned, this was no coincidence. Tanzanians expressed the belief that this was a plan cogently orchestrated by Kenya in order to satisfy dubious ambitions. The Tanzanian media reported that the EAA had collapsed due to the ‘*nyang’au*’ [hyenas] in Kenya whose primary goal was simply to set up private airlines which would solely benefit Kenya and not East Africa as a region.

In retaliation, Tanzania refused Kenya’s heavy transport to use its highways. The negative consequence of this stance was that Kenya’s business operation came to a halt. Moreover, Tanzania imposed a ban on Kenya tourists unless they agreed to abide by the continuously changing regulations drawn by the Tanzanian government. At this time, tourists visiting Tanzania from Kenya had to fly into Kilimanjaro or Dar es Salaam; they were not allowed to drive into the country using Kenya-based safari vehicles as had been the case before. One magazine captured this moment elegantly when it noted that tourists “will now do their touring of the great Serengeti and Ngorongoro game areas from bases in Arusha where the standards of hotels are much lower than those in Nairobi” (*Weekly Review*, 21 February 1977:1). Worse still, Tanzanian authorities closed borders and impounded no less than 30 Kenyan trucks owned by the quasi-governmental company called Kenatco. A total of 60 other vehicles belonging to tour companies and 30 aircrafts belonging to Nairobi-based firms were also impounded. A meeting held in Kisumu failed to resolve this impulse (*Weekly Review*, 11 April 1977:10). Whether the reasons for these moves were triggered by political or economic reasons remains debatable. However, what is clear is that these developments rendered the continued existence of the EAC difficult at best and impossible at worse.

For her part, in June 1977 Kenya recalled her citizens who were performing their regional obligations in Tanzania at the time. The official reason provided for this decision was that the EAC’s Finance Council had failed to agree on a venue for a meeting to discuss the budget for the following financial year. Moreover, another complaint from Kenya was that Tanzania had decided to impound her vehicles, as discussed above. Given these developments, all attempts to save the EAC failed.

Eventually, the East African leadership conceded that nothing could be done to salvage this regional body. They resolved to dissolve it in 1977. Although a confluence of factors converged to necessitate the dissolution of the EAC, Ojo (1985:159-171) summarises the reasons into four causal factors: (i) the polarization of national development as well as the perceived unequal gains in which Kenya's share of intra-community trade escalated from 63 per cent in 1968 to 77 per cent in 1974, while that of Uganda decreased from 26 to 6 per cent during the same period; (ii) inadequacy of compensatory and corrective measures; (iii) ideological differences and the rise of economic nationalism; and (iv) the impact of foreign influences as a result of the Cold War. It would be difficult to refute this succinct summary because it captures the core of the causal factors of the demise of the EAC in 1977.

### **Prospects for regional integration in Africa**

In the light of the discussion above, the following question should be asked: are there any prospects of establishing regional bodies in Africa and sustaining them? If so, which precautionary measures should be taken to ensure their sustainability? To the first question, the answer is in the affirmative. The fact that the AU recognizes no less than eight such regional bodies means that the prospects of establishing regional bodies in Africa are good. It is the second question that needs more thinking before it is adequately addressed. Time and space does not allow such an analysis in this paper. However, suffice to say when establishing regional bodies, African leaders should first study predecessor regional bodies and establish why they were dissolved. It is after this exercise that they could be in a position to map the way forward with current regional bodies and hopefully keep them for much longer.

I am mindful of the fact that situations change. For example, what obtained in the 1970s may not hold for the current period. However, there are lessons to be learnt from the politics of the 1960s and 1970s if regional organisations in Africa are to survive. Kapstein's (2010) title, "The East African Community: Why this time is different" is relevant to our discussion and the list of questions he asks in this piece are revealing. They paint an optimistic picture. Another warning by Reith and Boltz (2011) is that (East) Africans should be able to distinguish between "aspiration" on the one hand and "reality" on the other. Such advice is necessary if Africa is to embark on the regional integration agenda with confidence. The current assessment of progress on regional integration in Africa (2013) will go a long way towards mapping out the way forward on this important theme in African political and economic history. The road may be bumpy but the mission is not insurmountable.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has provided historical explanations as to why regional integration failed in East Africa in the 1970s. Although the focus of the paper is on the East African Community which lasted for ten years between 1967 and 1977, an argument has been made that such a regional body would not have survived because similar regional institutions had already disintegrated. Key among these was the federal University of East Africa which was established in June 1963 and was dissolved in 1970. The argument made in this paper is that although the writing was on the wall that the EAC was facing some difficulties and that its life was in limbo, the demise of the federal university made it almost impossible to keep the EAC up and running.

Another point worth noting in this paper is that both the academic and political leadership played an instrumental role in forging unity in East Africa. Similarly, the same leaders were responsible for the disintegration of regional institutions such as the EAC and the UEA. Moreover, as argued above, the demise of the EAC came about as a result of both exogenous and endogenous causal factors. Although East Africans later embraced the idea of regional integration and set the terms under which it had to operate, the idea was first conceived by Britain as part of its agenda of sustaining its hegemony in East Africa. Some of the factors that eventually led to the demise of the EAC (and the UEA) can be traced back to this history.

Although many factors were responsible for the failure of regional integration in East Africa, it is not an exaggeration to state that nationalism was the key factor. After obtaining political independence from Britain, the three East African countries put national interests above those of the region. Any attempt at regional integration was bound to fail because there was no political will to do so. In cases where such a will existed, regional integration failed on pragmatic grounds. Natural factors which made it impossible to have a common university calendar is but one such factor. The diction that history teaches us about where we come from so that we would be able to know where we are going was the driving motive behind writing this paper. It is in this context that the last part of the paper looks at the prospects for regional integration in Africa as the continent soldiers on.

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