

# Benefits and Challenges of Regionalism on National Security of Kenya

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**Abstract:** *The general objective of the study is to assess the benefits and challenges of regionalism on national security of Kenya. The study is anchored on the theory of Hegemonic War and Change as fronted by Robert Gilpins. The study was guided by exploratory research design that targeted population comprised of personnel from the embassies of Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, DRC and South Sudan, officials from the Ministry of East Africa and Regional Development in Kenya and senior military officers from Kenya Defence Forces. The sample size comprised of 20 respondents purposively selected. Questionnaires and interviews were used in collecting data. Data analysis involved use of qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques. The analyzed data was presented in tables. Results showed that benefits and challenges of regionalism for Kenya had a positive and significant relationship to national security. The study concludes that Kenya should continuously focus on the potential benefits accruing from regionalism as the foundation for harnessing the national security of its population. The study recommends for Kenya to utilize its dominant economic presence as a member of the expanding EAC to accrue more benefits for the national security of its people and the general welfare of the entire population in the region.*

**Keywords:** Regionalism, National Security, Kenya

## 1. Introduction

The recent wave for regionalism has achieved motivation from the success story of the regionalization of Europe in the form of European Union (EU). Scholars such as Clarke, Michael and Anthony and Asante have cited the EU as the centerpiece of the resurgent global strives for the spirit of regionalism<sup>1</sup>. The regionalism wave that culminated in the creation of the European Union gained credence in mid 1980s as a response for the necessity for economic restructuring, crisis for nation states and liberalization in continental Europe<sup>2</sup>.

The global spirit of regionalism witnessed the launching of the EU in 1993 in a continental gathering after the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty. Immediately after this, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was enacted in 1994 with the sole purpose of categorizing the world into three massive trading blocs. These were Europe, America and East Asia<sup>3</sup>. However, for the African continent, it was a wide berth of abandonment that ended in abandonment and divorce from the rest of the world trading blocs. The African countries found themselves continuously subjected and threatened by the system of liberalized trading agenda and the formation of trading blocs that were geographically linked and that perpetuated the notion of dependent relationship as the purveyor of new integration

process<sup>4</sup>.

Since then, the AU begun to fast truck the promotion of regional integration as a driver for catapulting the member states through future socio-economic, political and cultural cooperation. Similar to the current trends in other regions of Africa, Eastern Africa has similarly seen propagation of regional integration spirit. The most prominent regional blocs within East Africa are; the East Africa Community, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, and the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development<sup>5</sup>.

The mid-1980s witnessed the birth of new chapter of regionalism that acted more like a response to the process of liberalization and economic restructuring in the foundation of nation states<sup>6</sup>. The same spirit was witnessed in the East African region and specifically on Kenya. For Kenya, the quest for regionalism in the form of EAC emanates from the poor performance of International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank's structural adjustment programs as the solution to the country's economic problems in the 1980' and 1990s. The interventions by IMF and World Bank had negative consequences on the economic development agenda of Kenya<sup>7</sup>.

This led Kenya to put its future economic, political and

<sup>1</sup> Clarke, Michael, and Anthony Ricketts. "US grand strategy and national security: the dilemmas of primacy, decline and denial." *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 71, no. 5 (2017): 479-498.

<sup>2</sup> Asante Samuel. *Regionalism and the development expectations in Africa: expectations, realities and challenges*. Springer, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Pirozzi, Nicoletta, and Andréas Litsegård. "The EU and Africa: Regionalism and inter-regionalism beyond institutions." In *Inter-regionalism across the Atlantic Space*, pp. 75-93. Springer, Cham, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Clarke, Michael, and Anthony Ricketts. "US grand strategy and national security: the dilemmas of primacy, decline and denial." *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 71, no. 5 (2017): 479-498.

<sup>5</sup> Kebret, Haile. "The Republic of South Sudan: Progress, Prospects and Challenges of Regional Integration." (2018).

<sup>6</sup> Kebret, Haile. "The Republic of South Sudan: Progress, Prospects and Challenges of Regional Integration." (2018).

<sup>7</sup> Mulindwa, Paul. "Interstate Border Conflicts and their Effects on Region-Building and Integration of the East African Community." *African Journal of Governance and Development* 9, no. 2 (2020): 599-618

national security on EAC, since regional-based integration was viewed as friendly. This is since it mostly campaigned for the spirit of accountability and desire for local solutions to the internal problems of the region that was specifically driven by the citizens<sup>8</sup>. However, despite the existing optimism around the notion of regionalism reflected by the EAC, the regional body is grappling with some notable challenges. They include failure of the political elite to support and undertake full integration, competition on common export commodities that sometimes strain the political relations. Others include political strife emanating from stiff competition to secure resources to increase competitiveness in export commodities<sup>9</sup>. This begs the answer to the question- what are the impacts of benefits and challenges of regionalism on the national security of Kenya?

## 2. Literature Review

Globally, there is no country that is immune from one form of security or another. Even where countries coalesce to create regional bodies, insecurity challenges can never be wished away. For the regional blocs in both developed and developing countries, national security is synonymous with national unity and integration<sup>10</sup>. Where national security cannot be guaranteed, regional unit is far from reality. As such, the policy makers behind the endeavour for regionalism should take proactive measures to provide holistic approach to regional and national security for socio-economic, political, cultural and technological integration.

There are various benefits and challenges of regionalism that a country may yield from regionalism. Through regionalism, increase in employment has been recorded. This is especially through outsourcing of jobs and especially from the rich economies to the developing countries in Africa and Asia<sup>11</sup>. There are many companies like Cisco, Google among others that are using the labour force of developing countries through outsourced job opportunities. There is investment in infrastructure by the developed countries in the developing economies. For instance, China, USA and other European countries have massive investments in East Africa Community member states especially in energy, roads, and railway installations. Regionalism has accelerated the trade between developed and developing countries as witnessed by trade agreements such as African Growth and Opportunities Act (AGOA) enacted between USA and

African countries for the exportation of the African goods<sup>12</sup>.

Politically, issues related to good governance, transparency and accountability as well as integrity and the adherence to the rule of law have gained credence in many countries through regionalism. These are the tenets that form the clarion call for African Union, EAC and other regional bodies. This shows that regionalism has significant impact on politics that informs the national security of member states<sup>13</sup>. Trade blocs like the European Union, World Trade Organizations, AU and EAC among others have initiated transformation that details the ability of governments to focus and find solutions to such threats to humanity like terrorism and global warming that are threats to national security. Good governance that is the key driver for national security is advocated by regional bodies like the EAC<sup>14</sup>.

Regionalism has negative impacts on the political, socio-economic, cultural, and technological and security sectors. In the economic sector, regionalism has continued been a key drive to the economic might of the developed economies and have on the same line contributed to impoverization of the developing economies and especially those in Africa, Asia and South America<sup>15</sup>. Wherever issues related to outsourcing of jobs, huge profits are normally destined to the rich countries. Through regionalism, the drivers, owners and beneficiaries of the global policies that control the direction of politics and economics are usually the rich countries. The rich countries are the key stakeholders of the lending institutions like the World Bank and the IMF. The poor countries have to always bend to the dictum of the rich countries on issues of financial assistance and utilization of the borrowed finances<sup>16</sup>.

Control of commerce and political sovereignty is a threat to national securities of developing countries like Kenya. Even where political and social security of the population is concerned, the populations from the rich and developed economies enjoy potentially far much elevated covers than their counterparts in the developing countries<sup>17</sup>. This is especially on the security of basic needs like food, clothing and shelter where the populations from the developing countries are usually on their own and are constantly ravaged by hunger, diseases and extreme poverty. On issues like crime, developed countries have put in place measures to offer the best security against such vagaries like crime to

<sup>8</sup> Mulindwa, Paul. "Interstate Border Conflicts and their Effects on Region-Building and Integration of the East African Community." *African Journal of Governance and Development* 9, no. 2 (2020): 599-618.

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<sup>10</sup> Dan, Mou. "National Security Architecture, Good Governance and Nation Building-preventing Nigeria from becoming a "Failed State"." *International Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies* 5, no. 1 (2018): 1-32.

<sup>11</sup> Clarke, Michael, and Anthony Ricketts. "US grand strategy and national security: the dilemmas of primacy, decline and denial." *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 71, no. 5 (2017): 479-498.

<sup>12</sup> Katsarski, Nikolay. "Impact of the demographic situation on regional security." *Knowledge-International Journal* 31, no. 5 (2019): 1539-1543.

<sup>13</sup> Clarke, Michael, and Anthony Ricketts. "US grand strategy and national security: the dilemmas of primacy, decline and denial." *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 71, no. 5 (2017): 479-498.

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<sup>15</sup> Asante Samuel. *Regionalism and the development expectations in Africa: expectations, realities and challenges*. Springer, 2016.

<sup>16</sup> Jiboku, Peace A. "The challenge of regional economic integration in Africa: Theory and reality." *Africa's Public Service Delivery & Performance Review* 3, no. 4 (2015): 5-28.

<sup>17</sup> Asante Samuel. *Regionalism and the development expectations in Africa: expectations, realities and challenges*. Springer, 2016.

their people whereas crime is the order of the day for many citizens in the developing economies<sup>18</sup>.

Keen, Meg and John studied on the urban challenges of regionalism and resilience in Pacific Island States<sup>19</sup>. The purpose of the study is to create understanding on the challenges of urban planning and management in the context of a regionalized environment. The study used qualitative design where data was gathered from government officials in major urban centres in Pacific Island States. The findings established that due to weak urban planning and regulatory frameworks, efforts in regionalism are negated and this has serious implication on national security of the Pacific Island States. The recommendations are that concerted region actions to build resilience and proactive political and policy agenda are an upfront for mitigating on the challenges. The contextual gap is that the study is based in Pacific Island States. The use of qualitative design is a methodological gap.

In Iran, Zalei et al. researched on regionalism and the benefits and challenges of regionalism in Iran foreign relations<sup>20</sup>. The study adopted descriptive analytical analysis through use of library data and reliable internal and external sources of data. The findings showed that Iran has established eco-regional cooperation with Turkey and Pakistan through regionalism. However, the regional cooperation has failed to attain economic, political and security benefits for Iran and the region. The contextual gap is that the study is based in Iran.

Sampson studied on the benefits and challenges of situation of the legal and constitutional frontiers of state-religion relations in national security of Nigeria and the region<sup>21</sup>. This was an exploratory study with the intent of delineating the conceptual boundary between religion and politics, through the lens of national and regional security. The findings established that use of moderate secular regime has positive and significant implication in attainment of national and regional security. Additionally, existence of extreme secular regimes has continuously torpedoed the achievement of a healthy state-religion in Nigeria threatening the national and regional security. The study is based in Nigeria and this is a contextual gap.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the theory of Hegemonic War and

Change as fronted by Robert Gilpins<sup>22</sup>. The theory dictates that systems that are established through international agreements such as regionalism and that are aimed at integrating territories is binding. This is since such agreement calls for the participants to enact structures of social relations that have the sole aim of advancing and cushioning their common interests<sup>23</sup>. The benefit each participant is expected to gain dictates the general structure in the overall distribution of the final gains from the agreement. Changes to the dominant interests usually change over time leading to the various actors bound to benefit from a change in the system seeking to further reconfigure the system in order to get a more favorable distribution of benefits<sup>24</sup>.

In this regard, the theory proposes that, a balance is often obtained in a situation where none of the actors is bound to gain from changing the system. This implies that each partner is aware of the benefit accrued from forging of the agreement right from the beginning<sup>25</sup>. Secondly, the members may decide to strengthen the partners when it is deemed that they have a better chance of benefiting from the alliance than making reciprocal losses. Thirdly, in order to put in place better chances of gaining and rewards from the partnership, a country may decide to expand politically, economically and even on the territory of its interest as a way of enhancing its gains from the union<sup>26</sup>. Finally, whenever a situation arises that the strong powers in the agreement are unable to mitigate on any situation that disadvantages some members, hegemonic war is the recourse for creating the new power distribution. The theory was relevant in this study because it supported the concept of regionalism and related benefits and challenges confronting EAC countries and specifically Kenya.

### 4. Methodology

The study was guided by exploratory design. The design incorporated analysis of sample population as the representative of the entire population through interviews and use of key informant groups. The research design was useful as it supported the use of both quantitative and qualitative data. The population of the study comprised of personnel from the embassies of Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, DRC and South Sudan. In addition, the target population comprised of officials from the Ministry of East Africa and Regional Development in Kenya. Senior military officers from Kenya Defence Forces were also targeted.

<sup>18</sup> Dan, Mou. "National Security Architecture, Good Governance and Nation Building-preventing Nigeria from becoming a "Failed State"." *International Journal of Peace and Conflict Studies* 5, no. 1 (2018): 1-32.

<sup>19</sup> Keen, Meg, and John Connell. "Regionalism and resilience? Meeting urban challenges in Pacific Island states." *Urban Policy and Research* 37, no. 3 (2019): 324-337.

<sup>20</sup> Zarei, Bahador, Jalil Delshad, Seyed Mehdi Musavi Shahidi, and Seyyed Mahmoud Alavi. "Regionalism and the challenges of regionalism in Iran foreign relations." *Human Geography Research* 47, no. 4 (2015): 743-758

<sup>21</sup> Sampson, Isaac Terwase. "Religion and the Nigerian State: Situating the de facto and de jure Frontiers of State-Religion Relations and its Implications for National and regional Security." *Oxford Journal of Law and Religion* 3, no. 2 (2016): 311-339.

<sup>22</sup> Buzan, Barry, Barry G. Buzan, Ole W'ver, Ole Waever, and Ole Waever Barry Buzan. *Regions and powers: the structure of international security*. Vol. 91. Cambridge University Press, 2003.

<sup>23</sup> Buzan, Bond., Robert, Davis and Gilpin Roberts. *Security as a framework for analysis*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, London (1998).

<sup>24</sup> Buzan, Barry. "Will the 'global war on terrorism' be the new Cold War?" *International affairs* 82, no. 6 (2006): 1101-1118.

<sup>25</sup> Buzan, Barry, Barry G. Buzan, Ole W'ver, Ole Waever, and Ole Waever Barry Buzan. *Regions and powers: the structure of international security*. Vol. 91. Cambridge University Press, 2003.

<sup>26</sup> Buzan, B. & Wæver, O. (2003). *Regions and powers: The structure of international security*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



The sample size comprised of 20 respondents purposively selected. They included 10 officials from the Ministry of East Africa and Regional Development in Kenya and 10 senior military officers from Kenya Defence Forces. Questionnaires were used in collecting data and were administered to embassies and ministry officials. For the senior military officers in KDF, interview schedules were employed to gather information.

Primary and secondary data sources were utilized. The secondary data was gathered from published researches and works from articles, books, reports, onsite and digital repositories from EAC Secretariats Library and government documents. The primary data was obtained through questionnaires and interview schedules. Open and close-ended questionnaires were used in gathering data from respondents. Questionnaires targeted officials from embassies and ministries. Interviews targeted senior military officers from the rank of major sampled from Kenya Defense Forces.

Data analysis involved use of qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques. For qualitative data gathered from the open-ended questions and interview schedules, it was processed, summarized and categorized into appropriate themes. Content analysis technique was employed to determine which themes occur frequently in what context and how they related to one another. Quantitative data generated from questionnaires and interviews were triangulated to ascertain its efficacy. This category of data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics involved use of measures of central tendency like mean and mode, percentages and standard deviations. Inferential statistics used correlation and regression analytical methods. The analyzed data was presented in statistical graphs, pie-charts and bar graphs.

**5. Findings**

**Correlation of benefits and challenges of regionalism on national security of Kenya**

Table 1 indicates that benefits and challenges of regionalism for Kenya a positive and significant relationship to national security (r = 0.533, p<0.05). This implies that regionalism have both positive and negative implications on the national security of Kenya.

**Table 1:** Benefits and Challenges of Regionalism on National Security

Variables		National security	Benefits and challenges
National security	Pearson Correlation	1	.533**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	15	15
Benefits and challenges	Pearson Correlation	.533**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	15	15

**Regression Coefficients**

Regression coefficient is the slope portrayed by linear relationship between benefits and challenges of regionalism and national security of Kenya. This is presented in table 13.

The model is as;

$$\text{National security} = 7.531 + 4.118B + C + \epsilon$$

Results in table 2 indicated that regression coefficient for the relationship between benefits and challenges of regionalism for Kenya was positive and significant (t = 4.118, p-value 0.000). The results agreed with findings by Yusuf in a study on progress of regional economic integration in East Africa. The study illuminated the priorities, major achievements and problems that threaten the EAC. The findings established that political will power of leadership and existential threats from crimes such as insurgency and piracy is a threat to attainment of economic and political integration. The results compliment the findings by Jiboku on the challenges of economic integration in Africa<sup>27</sup>.

However, the results contrast the study by Badewa that for most African countries, the limitations from small variations in the goods produced from one country to another make them unsuitable for intra-continent trading<sup>28</sup>. Similarly, due to lack of infrastructures and trading systems designed to promote intercontinental trading, there is little trading connectivity among African countries. Such variations imply that regional trade is not well embraced among countries and efforts to promote regionalism and regional trade may be seen as efforts to threaten the interest of states. This sophistication is risky for national security of African countries like Kenya.

**Table 2:** Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1.	Constant	.217	.029		7.531	.000
	Benefits & challenges of regionalism	.284	.069	.273	4.118	.000

a. Dependent Variable: National security

**6. Discussion**

There was a balanced consensus from respondents that regionalism has benefits and possesses challenges to the national security of Kenya. Benefits and challenges of regionalism for Kenya a positive and significant relationship to national security (r = 0.533, p<0.05). Regression coefficient for the relationship between benefits and challenges of regionalism for Kenya was positive and significant (t = 4.118, p-value 0.000). This means that regionalism has potential benefits that if well harnessed by guarantee security of EAC and national security of Kenya. Failure to focus on the many benefits of regionalism may put Kenya in the position of dealing with the underlying negative consequences.

The study established that Kenya has historically faced instability from neighbouring countries as well as local

<sup>27</sup> Jiboku, Peace A. "The challenge of regional economic integration in Africa: Theory and reality." *Africa's Public Service Delivery & Performance Review* 3, no. 4 (2015): 5-28.

<sup>28</sup> Badewa, Adeyemi Saheed. "Regional security complex: The Boko Haram menace and socio-economic development crises in the Sahel." *Conflict, Security & Development* (2022): 1-23.

political instability. These challenges act as a driver for support of regionalism for Kenya to confront the threat to national security. The benefits of regionalism to national security of East Africa Community member states like Kenya include creation of a sense of belonging and brotherhood, hence promoting mutual cooperation as tensions and suspicion decrease among EAC member states. Due to interstate military cooperation and intervention, there is robust regional peace and stability through collective defence. There is rapid resolution of inter-member conflicts driven by collective security through information sharing as shown by the EACF forces currently pacifying rebel groups in Eastern DRC.

There are robust joint operations against insurgencies, armed groups and more possibility of sharing security military/military hardware and soft wares in times of need. There is existence of mechanism e.g. EAC Court of Justice in Arusha, which has capacity to resolve dispute between or among member state. Finally, a rogue member state which fuels conflict within the territory of another member state is likely to be prevailed upon by the group and compelled to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the offended state.

Some of the threats to national security of East Africa Community member states like Kenya include evolution of separatist ideas together with evolution of insurgent groups with anti-regionalism doctrines as shown by M23 in Eastern DRC that treats the regional force with suspicion. With free movement of people across the region, there is possibility of increased criminal activities like drugs and human trafficking, increase in trans-boundary crimes and drug trafficking and increase in cases of counterfeit goods. Impact of instability in one member state may escalate to other members e.g. insecurity stemming from failed states may spread its tentacles throughout the region. For instance, instability within one member state, like DRC, has significant effect on security of other member states like Rwanda and Uganda or instability in Somalia has been a threat to national security of Kenya. Free movement of people may allow even criminal elements to move around taking advantage of open and porous borders thus facilitating proliferation of small and light weapons. Such insecurity may breed conflicts resulting in internally displace persons (IDPs) and refugees from affected member states to others. There is possibility of corruption and other bad habits from one country being exported to other member states. Terrorists or insurgents defeated in one territory may find it easy to move to the territories of other

## 7. Conclusion

The relationship between benefits and challenges of regionalism for Kenya was positive and significant. The study concluded that Kenya should continuously focus on the potential benefits accruing from regionalism as the foundation for harnessing the national security of its population. Kenya should also mitigate on the various threats emanating from being a member of EAC through mutual collaboration on security issues with other EAC member states.

## 8. Recommendations

The study recommended for Kenya to utilize its dominant economic presence as a member of the expanding EAC to accrue more benefits for the national security of its people and the general welfare of the entire population in the region. Kenya should support and sensitize her population to participate and invest more in regional trade in EAC.

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