

## **THREATS TO REGIONAL SECURITY AND INTEGRATION WITHIN THE JURISDICTION OF THE EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Regional integration has allowed member states of regional blocs such as the East African Community (EAC) to cooperate in security matters within their jurisdictions to protect their territories, sovereignty, and interests from imminent threats. This study therefore examines the threats to regional security and integration within the EAC that would inhibit the realization of the political federation. In its examination of the threats, the study was guided by Article 124 of the EAC Treaty. The Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) was applied to stimulate an inquest into how the East African Community, through regional integration, can build synergy in security matters to counter the threats to regional security and integration within its jurisdiction. The study design was mixed approach which. Data was collected from 141 accessible respondents. The respondents comprised policy makers and technocrats within the EAC partner states, the EAC Secretariat in Arusha, Tanzania, and Ministries responsible for both Foreign and EAC Affairs in the capital cities of all Partner States. Others were officials from the High Commissions and Embassies of Partner States resident in Kenya and EACs Development Partners and Collaborating Organizations with regional offices in Nairobi. Primary data was collected via structured interviews and structured questionnaires while secondary data was gleaned from 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. 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. (286 Words)

**Key Words:** Threats, regional security, regional integration, security cooperation, jurisdiction of 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, 2017). The East African Community (EAC) was initially formed in 1967 by Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania but collapsed in 1977. It took twenty years of negotiation for its resuscitation in 1999. In 2007, Burundi and Rwanda joined the Community, and in 2016, South Sudan became the 6th EAC Partner State. 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. This study therefore examines the threats to regional security and integration within the EAC that would inhibit the realization of the political federation.

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

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 is in spite of 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 (EAC, 2013). It is likely that the EAC as the region's policy-making institution lack the capacity to adequately advise, inform and persuade the Partner States to develop an outward-looking policy that will ensure mitigation of the threats to regional peace and security. The current study thus 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 objective of the study was to examine the threats to security and regional integration within the jurisdiction of the East African Community.

## **2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Threats to Security and Regional Integration**

The world experiences a multiplicity of security threats and instability. The European Union (EU) member states for instance face several challenges owing to new and sophisticated security threats such as radicalization, migration crises, growing terrorist threats and the consequences of the economic and financial crisis (Park, 2015). The EU has therefore signed treaties, protocols, and agreements in security cooperation with other regions and is realigning its strategy for foreign and security policy to involve its neighbours in targeted partnerships at the domestic, regional and global levels (Arbatov, 2016). Almost all the major threats to the security in Africa stem from the internal rather than external factors and result in civil wars and other forms of violence (Abiyu, 2015). Like Europe, it relies heavily on security cooperation among member states and the rest of the international community.

According to the SIPRI 2005 Yearbook, the trend of conflict and instability within the EAC states continues to make it one among the most unstable regions in the world (SIPRI, 2005). The 2012 United Nations African Human Development Report, (UN, 2012), argues that food insecurity in the region is a matter of grave concern and a threat to a section of the population because it is a precursor for the region's continued underdevelopment and source of conflicts. Further, poverty, disease, food insecurity, and the lack of available and affordable health care and education add to the list of security challenges common to the EAC Partner States (Finlay, Berganas and Fessler, 2011).

### **2.1 Theoretical Framework**

The study employed the Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) to stimulate an inquest into how the East African Community through regional integration, can build synergy in security matters counter the threats to regional security and integration within its jurisdiction. The Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) fronts the regional level of analysis of security issues in the international system that gained prominence after the end of the Cold War, when the structure of the world system changed from bipolar to unipolar (Buzan and Wæver, 2003).

The RSCT brings to the fore pertinent issues about the concepts of societal security and securitization. Securitisation, according to Buzan and Waever, (2003) entails the construction of a security problem using the speech act of security. In this sense, specific issues become categorized as security issues, and as such, are expected to be addressed through security solutions due to the feeling of importance and urgency prompting measures to deal with it outside the purview of the usual political process (Buzan *et al.*, 1998). On the flipside, de- securitization, i.e., removing issues from the security agenda instead of the securitization agenda (Waever, 1995) became inevitable. Knudsen, (2001) has however criticized the concept of securitization as ambiguous because it either means the act of politicizing an issue from obscurity or taking an issue that was once political out of the political agenda.

Buzan and Waever (2003) opine that the effect of geographical adjacency on security interaction is most influential and most visible in the military, political, societal, and environmental sectors. Therefore, 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).

The security complex that is 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 DISCUSSION

The study sought to establish the threats to regional security and integration within the jurisdiction of the EAC. The study first tabulated twenty common security threats. Secondly, the study analysed the five major threats to security in the EAC.

##### 4.1 Common Security Threats

The study drew a list of twenty possible threats. The list included items from three key categories: domestic, regional and international security threats. The respondents were required to select the threats they considered most common. The results are shown in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1: Common Security Concerns within the Jurisdiction of EAC**

Security concerns within the EAC		Domestic	Regional	International
1	Proliferation of SALWs		X	X
2	Terrorism		X	X
3	Rebellions	X	X	
4	Civil Unrest	X		
5	Car Trafficking	X	X	
6	Money Laundering	X	X	X
7	Drug trafficking	X	X	X
8	Refugees	X	X	
9	Organized crime	X	X	X
10	Sabotage	X		

11	Resource based conflict	X	X	X
12	Negative Ethnicity	X		
13	Maritime issues		X	X
14	Youth Radicalization	X	X	X
15	Cattle rustling	X	X	
16	Poverty	X		
17	Border Disputes	X	X	
18	Electoral violence	X		
19	Political Instability	X		
20	Human trafficking	X	X	X

Notes. X = Presence of Security Threat

Source: Field Data, 2017.

The table shows that the respondents identified seventeen security concerns that emanate from within the Partner States, and were thus referred to as domestic security threats. There were fourteen security concerns that originate from the EAC regional border. These concerns were clustered together as regional security threats. Lastly, the security concerns that were deemed to arise from beyond the regional borders of the EAC were grouped together as international security threats.

From the list in Table 4.1, the study identified the five major threats to the EAC region. These were cited as: poverty, political leadership, terrorism, conflict over resources and proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs). The study respondents were required identify the threat they considered greatest towards security and regional integration within the EAC. Figure 4.2 is a graphic presentation of the responses.

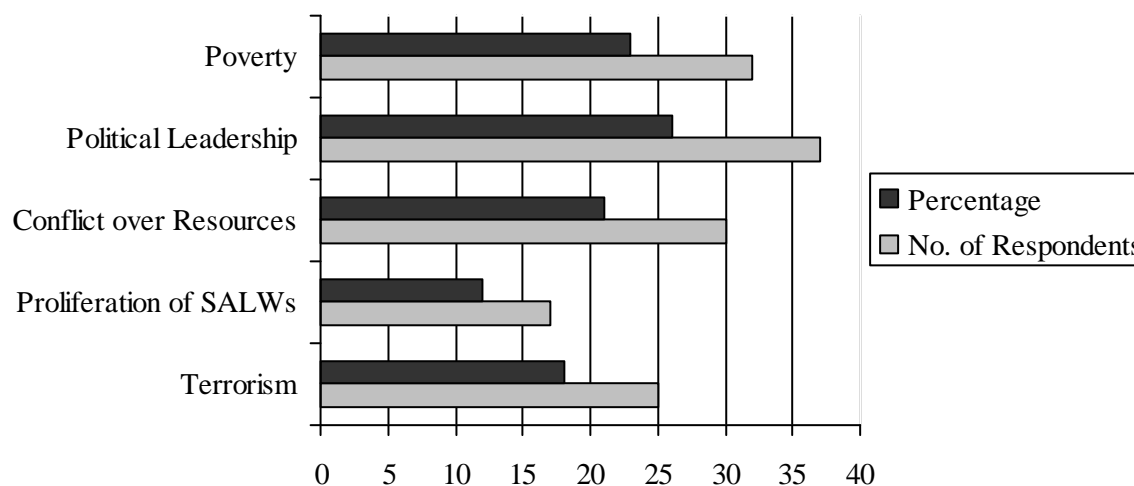


Figure 4.2: Major Security Threats in the EAC region

Source: Field Data, 2017.

#### 4.2.1 Poverty

Poverty was identified as a major threat to regional security by 32 (23%) respondents. Poverty was viewed as a creation of the political class through segregating groups within the society, from productive economic engagements. Another way in which poverty was viewed in the study was about the economic growth and development of the Partner States. All the EAC states are ranked as

Less Developed Countries (LDCs) because the majority of the population live below the poverty line as set by the World Bank, at less than one US dollar a day. However, Gasiorek, Byiers, and Rollo (2016) argue that the poverty levels in Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda are steadily declining. They also argue that Burundi has the highest numbers and depth of poverty relative to the other member states, while poverty is lowest in Kenya.

The study found out that unemployment propagates poverty because people are unable to meet their basic needs. They then depend on the few employed for survival. The employed are also subjected to poverty when they have too many dependents to take care of adequately. It emerged that the search for employment in cities and towns leads to overpopulation, especially in the low - cost parts of the towns commonly referred to as slums. The living conditions in the slums are harsh owing to the absence of basic amenities coupled with the population pressure and large numbers of idlers. In his analysis of the unemployment levels within the EAC, Ubwani, (2016) argues that unemployment, mainly of the youth within the EAC is a major cause of the upsurge of insecurity. One respondent intimated that the high unemployment level heightens insecurity in the region especially among unemployed youth, when they are enticed by terrorists. An analysis of the respondent's statement shows that, militia and other organised criminal groups recruit new members from a ready and steady supply of poor and unemployed youth. Therefore, the regional leadership must take and expedite the necessary action that will save the youth from the dehumanising conditions that force them to turn to a life of crime.

#### **4.2.2 Poor Political leadership and Governance**

During the study, 37 (26%) respondents indicated that poor political leadership and governance was both a cause of insecurity and a major regional security threat. It was argued that poor leadership limits the type of policies that the states make and agree. The study established that poor leadership is elicited in the inability of the leaders to negotiate for low-interest loans for funding of development projects. Eyster, (2014) asserts that the EAC is weak in the negotiation of sustainable economic activities through collective bargaining agreements (CBA) that would generate wealth. This assertion rings true to the extent that the EAC Partner States have enormous debts that become unbearable to the citizens who are forced to shoulder the costs thereby, exacerbating poverty in the region.

An analysis of the respondents' statement reveals that poor leadership and governance creates socioeconomic inequality through inequitable distribution of resources and inadequate provision of goods, services, and security. Further, when certain groups within the community are denied space for political participation, cultural expression or gainful employment opportunities socioeconomic inequality is realized, that could lead to conflict. In corroboration, Ubwani, (2016) argues the inequalities that are visible within the Community stem from the bad policies are made by the political leadership. As a political federation, the EAC promises to deliver common foreign and security policies, good governance and effective implementation of the prior stages of regional integration (EAC, 2018) and has made several efforts towards this. However, these efforts could be thwarted if social vices such as corruption are not addressed.

#### **4.2.3 Resource-based conflict**

From the study, 30 (21%) respondents mentioned that conflict over shared resources was a primary regional security threat in the EAC region. The resource-based conflicts in the region are mainly water-related and land-based. The study established that there are several trans-boundary conflicts

over shared resources that arise in instances where one state seeks to advance its interests over the resource. In such a case, the given state claims the resource in question and denies its usage by the other States. Examples of such conflicts over resource use in the region include fishing in Lake Victoria among Kenyan/Ugandan/Tanzanian nationals and conflicts over grazing grounds among Ugandan and Tanzanian cattle keepers in the cattle corridor between Ankole/Rakai in Uganda and Minziro/Kagera area of Tanzania. There are also conflicts in wetlands over fish and forest resources of Minziro/Sango Bay area along the Uganda – Tanzania border (Isoke, 2015), as well as the conflicts between Kenya and Uganda over Migingo Island (Okoth, 2012).

The EAC has set up institutions to coordinate the use of shared resources. These institutions include the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA), the East African Court of Justice (EACJ), East African Network for Environmental Compliance and Enforcement, the Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization (LVFO), and the Lake Victoria Basin Commission (LVBC). Also, the Community has urged its Partner States to harmonize their legislation and national institutional frameworks to facilitate proper management and utilization of the shared resource. In the meantime, the citizens continue to conflict regarding their use and ownership of resources. The study posits that the EAC regional integration can be promoted if all Partner States view and use the shared resources as common property.

#### **4.2.4 Terrorism**

Acts of terrorism have increased in the recent past in the region. This increase informed 25 (18%) respondents assertion that terrorism was a major threat to regional security. Bashir, 2007 cited in Kimunguyi, (2011) argues that the East African region is the most vulnerable in Africa and that nearly all the states therein have at some point in history been victims of acts of terror. It emerged that the region was an easy target for terrorist and militia attacks owing to the fragility of states in the wider East Africa region coupled with porous borders, illegal immigration and the proliferation of weapons. Also, border communities provide cover for terrorists and militants, particularly in the areas that are not under effective government control. Kenya continues to be the most susceptible to terrorist attacks that are propagated by Al Shabaab, a militant group based in Somalia. The militants have carried out brutal attacks in several areas, including Garissa University College in 2015 where 150 people were killed and the Westgate Shopping Mall in Nairobi in 2013 where about 70 people lost their lives (Kamau, 2017).

According to a respondent, the weaknesses in the national security organs make it possible for free movement of the terrorists when he reiterated that in most of the sparsely populated areas, security agencies are few and ill-equipped to perform effective patrols. Therefore, it is easy for criminals to move in and out of the areas and carry out their illegal activities. To corroborate the respondent's statement, Okoth, (2015), asserts that criminals manage to engage in illegal activities across porous borders, particularly where weak government structures and inadequate law enforcement mechanisms exist. In essence, the seat of the central governments of the Partner States is often far away from the borderlands thus areas quickly become a safe-haven for criminal groups and militia. The local administrations and law enforcement officers here tend to be outnumbered because many people are reluctant to live in areas where they are constantly exposed to security threats. The gangs then terrorise the residents with impunity.

#### **4.2.5 Proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWs)**

During the study, 17 (12%) respondents attributed most of the security issues and threats to regional security in the EAC region to the proliferation of SALWs. One respondent opined that the Community needs to establish more efficient monitoring mechanisms at border points, and increase cooperation and collaboration as well as to create awareness about the adverse effects of the use and misuse of SALWs. Njoroge, (2015) asserts that cooperation and collaborative efforts that would diminish the threat of illegal proliferation of SALWs should be enhanced to ensure regional security. In so doing, he corroborates the respondent's statement. The study, therefore, posits that it is imperative for every citizen of the Community to be informed on the dangers of SALWs, through collective mobilization of communities. Once communities are aware of the dangers, they can be an important source of information for the Partner States.

Goal 12 of the EAC Strategy for Peace and Security is to establish measures to combat the proliferation of illicit small arms and light weapons in line with the Nairobi Protocol and other international and regional instruments. The Community successfully operationalized national focal points in all five member states and works in tandem with them to combat SALWs proliferation (EAC, 2016). However, one of the challenges faced by the Community is the Partner States' commitment and willingness to harmonize national laws relating to SALWs. A report on the Analysis of Armed Crime Rates' that conducted between 2010 and March 2016 with the support of African Development Bank (AfDB) indicated that Rwanda registered 421 cases related to armed crimes between 2010 and March 2016, the least in EAC compared to other four bloc member states mentioned in the study. Tanzania registered 9, 646 cases; Kenya 12.877 while Burundi and Uganda complete the list with 26, 041 and 34, 512 cases respectively (AfDB, 2016).

### **5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

#### **5.1 Summary of the Findings**

From the five common threats to security and regional integration in the EAC, the study identified five major threats namely: poverty, poor political leadership and governance, conflict over shared resources, acts of terrorism and proliferation of SALWs. Poverty was identified as a major threat to regional security by 32 (23%) respondents. At least, 37 (26%) respondents indicated that poor political leadership and governance was both a cause of insecurity and a major regional security threat while 30 (21%) respondents mentioned that conflict over shared resources was a primary regional security threat in the EAC region.

Acts of terrorism were considered to have increased in the recent past in the region. This increase informed 25 (18%) respondents assertion that terrorism was a major threat to regional security. During the study, 17 (12%) respondents attributed most of the security issues and threats to regional security in the EAC region to the proliferation of SALWs.

#### **5.2 Conclusion**

After the examination of the threats to regional security and integration, it was established that the region had overlapping, intertwined and interrelated security concerns. The security concerns in the region all have an adverse bearing on the economies of the Partner States, and causes the EAC region to be termed as one of the most volatile regions in the world by several quarters. The security complex that characterizes the EAC does not allow any of the Partner States to ignore or disregard the security threats or levels of insecurity in any of the states. Also, their interconnected nature has



proven that a problem in one part of the region affects the rest of the region either directly through internationalization of conflicts, refugee flows and an interruption in trade flows.

The study concluded that attempts at security cooperation within the Community to mitigate the threats to regional security and integration within its jurisdiction have been staggered and inconsistent. 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. The degree of political commitment in regards to addressing the political, economic and social effects of regional security threats and their influence on the envisioned political federation remain a pertinent question. It is therefore the prerogative of the Partner States to adopt both collective and cooperative security approaches to mitigate the security threats therein.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

The study recommends that the EAC should step up cooperation in the political and security fields within its jurisdiction because of the complex nexus between security and development. The Community's approach to collective and cooperative security must be progressive and incorporate diplomacy and consensus building. This approach is important, particularly when setting the security agendas and prioritising of security-related activities for successful security cooperation and regional integration that culminates in a political federation.

### **5.4 Suggestions for Further Research**

Further research needs to be done into the cooperative security approaches that can be leveraged by regional blocs to ensure that their members achieve their economic growth and development goals ought to be done. This suggestion is premised on in the wake of the complex contemporary security threats that have dogged the EAC region for decades.

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