

Juma V.Mwapachu. Challenging the Frontiers of African Integration: The Dynamics of Policies, Politics and Transformation in the East African Community, (E&D Vision Publishing: Dar es Salaam, 2012)

Jacob Lisakafu

Lecturer, Open University of Tanzania

[E-mail.jaclisakafu@yahoo.com](mailto:jaclisakafu@yahoo.com)

Regional integration has for a long time been part of economic development strategy for the African continent. The period 1960-1980 witnessed the emergence of major regional integration schemes that have pushed forward the continent's economic integration agenda. Several regional arrangements have emerged and officially been recognized by the African Union (AU). They focus mainly on intra-regional trade, peace and security. One of these regional arrangements is the East African Community (EAC). The EAC is a regional intergovernmental organisation of six member states: the Republics of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda. Their aspired integration dates back to pre-colonial times. The integration of Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda, is actually a revival of the old East African Cooperation which collapsed in 1977, after its 10-years existence. "*Challenging the Frontiers of African Integration: The Dynamics of Policies, Politics and Transformation in the East African Community*" by Juma Mwapachu is among the volumes at the centre of the history and strategic development through regional integration in Africa.

The book under review is a collection of speeches of the author during his five years of leadership as Secretary General of the EAC from 2006 to 2011. It focuses on the dynamics of policies, politics and transformation strategic of the EAC. Juma Mwapachu is a lawyer by training and has had opportunities to serve in various capacities in public and private sectors in Tanzania. Mwachapu's book has the advantage of having been written by a diplomat and former employee of the EAC who was deeply involved in the web of political machination driven by member states within African regional integration.

The main purpose of the book is to examine the role of the EAC in the economic integration of concerned member states and to identify pertinent problems and challenges. The author provides an analysis of how the EAC has been working to realize an East African identity. This has been made possible through history by the

Book Review

traditional bond which is most often taken for granted and rarely seen or omitted to be tackled in an environment imbued with growing sentiments of national identities (p. xvii). Through experiences in hands on practice, the author provides a wealth of information, analysis, appreciation, possibilities, lessons and policy changes and challenges for economic integration and political federation for an African Economic Community (AEC).

The author boldly examines salient policy and political issues that have and continue to underpin the EAC integration initiatives. Some of these issues have had direct impact on the character of regional integration of trade arrangements and decision making. An analysis is given on the roles of different stakeholders and organs which support integration including the civil society, the media, business community, and public education. The book also carries a collection of speeches on diverse range of issues on political, social, security and economic aspects. The author believes that the use of speeches and technical papers serves better in exposing the issues to be considered at each stage in the progress of the integration. The publication is divided into fourteen parts. The book is organised in such a way that it helps to address key issues at different phases of African integration.

The book opens with highlights on efforts for integration during the establishment of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963. It then examines progress made through the formation and development of various RECs in the effort to achieve an AEC earlier ratified in the Abuja Treaty of 1994. While it is difficult to thoroughly explore all references the author listed, the detailed bibliography provides the basis for further information on issues raised in the book.

In the first part of the book entitled "Challenges of African Integration" the author gives an insight into the challenges that have confronted the EAC over years on the realization of strong regional economic bloc including economic and political perspectives *vis a vis* multiplicity and overlapping membership of states in Regional Economic Communities (RECs). These overlaps of membership in the RECs are perceived to be the biggest challenge in achieving real African continental integration. This is because RECs inhibit total commitment and participation of state members in regional group due to their other similar commitments elsewhere. For example Tanzania's decision to postpone the signing of the EAC Defence Co-operation Protocol containing an article on the inclusion of a mutual Defence Pact by the EAC Partner states is due to a similar commitment in the SADC Protocol (p.5). The author discloses lack of strong executive authority of the EAC Secretariat which affects the daily affairs of the community. The weakness of the EAC Secretariat is

J. Lisakafu

caused by uncoordinated interests and concerns over sovereign of the member states. This lack of concrete allegiance contributes to slow implementation of the EAC integration agenda (p.42).

In part two and three of the book, the author discusses the stages of integration in respect of the EAC including customs union as the entry point, the establishment of common market, monetary union and political Federation of the East African States. The EAC being the most successful of the African RECs launched its customs union in 2005. The union was expected to be fully operational by 2010 far ahead the Abuja Treaty, envisioned for realization between 2007 and 2017. In part four of the book, the author reviews the decision making organs and institutions involved in implementing and monitoring adherence to agreements and plans in place to ensure achievement of the goals of integration. In the case of the EAC, most of the integration initiatives were established under articles 9(1) and 9(2) of the EAC Treaty (p.139). Part five and six of the book discuss the challenges of building an effective regional organisation under the influence of politics of different nations which largely determines the pace and depth of regional integration.

In part seven, the book examines opportunities and challenges of trade cooperation within EAC member states, including the role of business in furthering and strengthening regional integration. The author carefully elaborates on the origins of the EAC, its current status and future prospects. The book points out emerging challenges facing the expansion of the EAC as a result of admission of new members. Part eight of the book dwells on the role of the media as one of the key promoters of public awareness and understanding about the need for the EAC integration. Part nine discusses the role of education in promoting regional integration. This part also underlines challenges of harmonizing education systems in East Africa, as part of the process of supporting and promoting regional integration.

Part ten highlights the role of the local government as one of the actors in promoting the EAC integration process. The author notes that the current regional integration agenda has been monopolized by central governments of member states. He discusses why and how local government is a key partner in making regional integration a success. Part eleven justifies why cooperation in matters of security and defense is vital for regional integration. Part twelve of the book provides a brief background to the tripartite framework of the COMESA-EAC-SADC including the underlying objectives of this unique framework of collaboration in Africa. Part thirteen of the book highlights on some of the EAC's collaboration arrangements with countries outside Africa as well as with international agencies within the

Book Review

regional bloc, all in the effort to realize regional integration. In part fourteen the author discusses the challenges and recommends the way forward for the future of the EAC integration agenda. The author concludes his book by stressing the importance of addressing the challenges so far experienced and using them as lessons for greater clarity of the objectives, priorities, financial and human resources for smother realization of the EAC integration. The author underlines the importance of building financial and institutional capacities to boost recurrent and development needs of the EAC. Again, the author advises partner states to unpack some of their core dimensions of sovereignty and embrace the objectives of supra-nationality for realization of the social and economic development priorities of regional and continental integration.

The first major concern that emerges from this book includes overlapping membership in RECs partner states causing coordination and harmonization challenges for African integration. The author of this book does not agree that overlapping membership in regional groups is a problem hindering integration. He asserts that, if properly used, RECs can serve as useful building blocks for an integrated EAC and ultimately United States of Africa. He reaffirms that RECs by their historical, ethno-cultural, economic and social homogeneity are effective in promoting regional integration as exemplified by the tripartite of COMESA-EAC-SADC forming a grand free trade area, customs union and prospecting to further merge the three groups into an even stronger regional bloc.

The second issue is state leadership's commitment to integration. The author notes that inter-state commitment to integration is not satisfactory due to the suspicious attitude of member states that integration may in one way or another diminish the partners of existing leadership. As a result, the governance systems of member states do not fully embrace the provisions of RECs, instead they regard the RECs as threats to their national interests. It is further noted that political leadership is the most critical factor in driving the vision, mission, ethos and trust of the integration (p. xviii). The first President and founder of the Tanzanian nation, Julius Nyerere provided exemplary leadership since 1960s on the need for East African integration and political federation of the then East Africa Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania. Nyerere offered to delay Tanganyika's independence to enable the establishment of a federal East Africa. Nyerere argued that regional institutions that coordinate regional programmes and projects should be given greater decision making powers than is presently the case, if regional integration is to be actualized as effective responsive to the challenges of Africa in the 21st century.

J. Lisakafu

The implementation of regional development projects is difficult because each member state has its own priorities at national level and mostly focuses on developing national rather than regional infrastructure and economy (p. 92). Nyerere did not personally agree with this tendency. He argued that strong national economies are essential building blocks of a strong regional integration. He maintained, "it is essential that African national economics are in the first place transformed into more vibrant and robust economies to engender in them the much needed confidence to venture out more aggressively at regional economies levels". He emphasized the need to establish dynamic alliance while at the same time ensuring that regional efforts received sufficient attention.

In analysis of the challenges of African integration, the author highlights several challenges including first financial challenges which are mainly due to member states' failure to honour obligations on agreed monetary contributions (which even when paid fully are not sufficient). The failure to contribute towards regional efforts is attributed to burdens on small economies like Rwanda and Burundi. There is also the overdependence of African States on foreign financial support from rich nations (p. 174-175). On this, the author recommends adjustment of policy framework including forcing for deliberate cooperation and integration such as the establishment of a partnership fund for identical projects. The issue of mono-culture nature of most African states is also a challenge. Most states in Africa manufacture commodities that are almost identical for export purposes. As a result, they cannot sell to or buy from each other so as to generate foreign currency. Although much has been done at member state level to facilitate project funding, it remains a major limiting factor for donors to give credit for agricultural activities for they charge very high interest rates. Yet, insecurity and political unrests of some members such as Burundi and South Sudan have had a damaging effect on trade and economic development of the East African region (p.40). Poor infrastructure is another major challenge that hinders the bolstering of trade within the EAC and the rest of the World (p.40). Lack of rail transportation and existence of poor roads make movement of goods, people and services too slow and expensive. This scenario defeats the purpose of establishing a free trade area within RECs. Other challenges emerge due to the enlargement of the EAC following the admission of new members. These challenges include urbanization, globalization, climate change and unemployment. The author argues that in order to achieve greater benefits of regional integration, the EAC must institute organs and systems that push for harmonization and quality assurance of all goods, services and human resources.

Book Review

As pointed out earlier, this book is a collection of some of the author's speeches. It is therefore obvious that it cannot address all the pertinent issues at depth to match the complexities of East African regional integration initiatives. Even so, the book has covered important contribution towards wider understanding of the complexity of the processes of regional integration and cooperation in East Africa and indeed the African continent. The book is a significant contribution not only to literature about African regional integration, but also lessons for most retirees who never publish about their working experience, achievements and challenges. After retirement from public service, the author decided to put on record his speeches in a form of a book to act as a reference by future generations. This is a good practice since in EAC and specifically in Tanzania most retired experts do not publish their experiences and leave nothing on record for reference. This assists many young people avoid re-inventing the wheel on issues which they would only build on what has already been experienced by the older generation.