

Fast Tracking East African Political Federation

A View from Uganda

Korwa G. Adar

The decision by the summit in 2004 to institute studies on fast tracking East African Political Federation (EAPF) has rekindled debate on the project integration in the region, an issue which has eluded the people of East Africa since the 1960s. The trajectory of integration in East Africa is clouded with underlying socio-cultural, econo-political and religio-linguistic differentiations that have to be addressed to ensure the durability and consolidation of the project. The purpose of the policy brief is twofold. Firstly, it puts into proper perspective, the views of Ugandans on the question of fast tracking political federation envisaged by the summit. Secondly, it identifies and analyses the main concerns raised by Ugandans on political integration and provides what they consider to be viable recommendations relevant for the project.

Introduction

In August 2004, the summit of the heads of state of the East African Community (EAC) appointed a committee of six experts, two from each partner state, to conduct a study on the possibilities of fast tracking EAPF. The summit invoked Article 123, paragraph 6, which empowers the heads of state “to initiate the process towards the establishment of a political federation ... by directing the Council to undertake the process.” Article 123, paragraph 7, on the other hand, provides that the summit may order a study to be first undertaken by the council.¹ Kenya’s Attorney General, Amos Wako was appointed chairman of the committee. The committee submitted its report in November 2004, after conducting a three month study.

The Wako Committee recommended, among other things, the establishment of similar studies to be conducted at the EAC partner states level. The aim is to give the people of East Africa more opportunities to debate and register their views on the project in a holistic manner. Consequently, the National Consultative Committees (NCCs) were established and thereafter launched simultaneously by the partnering heads of state on 13 October 2006, in Nairobi, Dar es Salaam, and Kampala.² The Ugandan NCC was comprised of nineteen experts drawn from the civil society as well as from the private and public sectors. It began its work on 31 October 2006 after receiving its terms of reference from Rt Hon. Eriya Kategaya, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of East African Community Affairs. This policy brief puts into proper perspective the views of Ugandans on

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Table 1 Statistical Comparison of Uganda and Other EAC Member States

Country	Area (000 sq. km)	Population (Million)	Total number of EALA members	Population represented in EALA (Average per representative)	Partner states' contributions to EAC budget
Burundi	28	8	9	890 000	4 296 532
Kenya	580	36	9	4 000 000	4 296 532
Rwanda	26	10	9	1 100 000	4 296 532
Tanzania	945	37	9	4 000 000	4 296 532
Uganda	241	29	9	3 000 000	4 296 532
Total	1 820	120	45	12 990 000	21 482 660

Sources: EAC, 2007. *16th Extraordinary Meeting of the Council of Ministers, Report of the Council*. Ref EAC/CM/EX 16/CM/2007. Arusha: EAC Secretariat, pp. 24-27, World Bank, 2002. *World Development Indicators, 2000*. Washington, DC. World Bank.

fast tracking the EAC political federation project. It is necessary, first of all, to provide a synopsis of Uganda's economic standing *vis-à-vis* the other member states.

Table 1 illustrates that Uganda is the third largest and most populous country in the East African region. It has a total population of 29 million. However, each country contributes equally towards the operations and functions of the EAC. Uganda's total trade with the EAC countries has increased overtime to 20 per cent between 2004 and 2005. For example, Uganda's share of intra-EAC trade increased from US\$388 million, US\$452 million, US\$504 million, and US\$639 million in 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005 respectively. The total volume of trade within the EAC region registered US\$1 125 billion, US\$1 291 billion, US\$1 518 billion and US\$1 839 billion in the same period. Uganda's percentage share of total trade in 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005 reached 34 per cent, 35 per cent, 33 per cent and 35 per cent respectively. Kenya has the largest share of total trade, which reached 53 per cent, 49 per cent, 48 per cent and 48 per cent in 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005 respectively.³ Therefore, it is necessary for Ugandans to be exposed to the issues within the region, especially to issues of political integration. Thus Uganda is set to benefit from the federation whenever it materialises.

The National Consultative Process in Uganda

The terms of reference that were handed over to the NCC of Uganda covered a wide range of issues. These were designed to capture the attitudes, perceptions and views of the people of Uganda on fast tracking the EAPF project initiated by the summit. The terms of reference for the NCC were guided by the following:⁴

- Coordinating the national consultations on fast tracking EAPF in conjunction with the Cabinet and Ministry of East African Community Affairs
- Using existing EAC instruments that may be useful in the project in the areas of sensitisation, information dissemination and collection of views from Ugandans
- Disseminating information to the public about EAC in general and the rationale for fast tracking the EAPF, in particular through television, radio, print and electronic media
- Enlightening the general populace on regional integration through educating people on the benefits, challenges and addressing any fears of integration
- Explaining the proposed structures of the federation, functions and responsibilities within the federation and the road map for establishing the political federation through rallies, meetings and seminars/workshops
- Consulting with and collecting views and comments of all key stakeholders on the political federation process of the EAC
- Compiling and analyzing the views and opinions collected during the consultative process
- Preparing a national report on the findings for presentation to cabinet and parliament before being forwarded to the council of ministers for submission to the summit in July 2007.

Objectives

The involvement of the people of Uganda and East Africa as a whole is critical for the short-term and long-term survival and durability of the EAC. Understanding the extent to which Ugandans are aware of the aims and objectives of the EAC and the potential benefits to be derived from its

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formation is of paramount importance. The study was guided by four main objectives:⁵

- To establish the level of awareness among different constituencies on key issues of the EAPF
- To establish people's attitudes on important issues of the EAPF
- To obtain people's opinions on pertinent issues of the EAPF
- To seek views on fast tracking the EAPF.

During its consultations with individuals and groups, the NCC focused on issues that cut across socio-cultural, econo-political, legal, ethno-religious and environmental perspectives. The success of the EAC and particularly of fast tracking the political federation requires the direct involvement of the people of the region. This is critical because at some stage, the people of EAC will be called upon to transform the regional organization into a functioning political federation through the ballot box.

Fast Tracking Political Federation: Uganda in Perspectives

Although Ugandans had varying opinions on some issues pertaining to the study, the NCC found that there existed a general support across the societal divide on fast tracking political federation and other questions associated with the EAC integration. For example, Table 2 indicates that 65 per cent and 55 per cent of Ugandans are aware of the EAC and EAPF respectively. Furthermore, 87 per cent and 75 per cent support the EAC integration process and fast tracking East African political federation respectively.

The Main Concerns Regarding Political Federation

The Ugandans who participated in the project raised a number of concerns:⁶ The loss of land was a major concern for most of the participants. Land is the main source of wealth for the majority of ordinary people. Any potential loss of land due to political integration is perceived with anxiety and reservation.

Economic concerns included the impact of globalization on the ordinary people; the domination of the economy in the country by a few Ugandans; a people-centered and market-driven economy prescriptions in the treaty that does not reflect the reality on the ground because Ugandans are

Table 2 Level of Awareness and Support for the EAC Integration Process

Category of Support	Level of Awareness about EAC (%)	Level of Awareness on EAPF (%)	Support for EAC Integration Process (%)	Support for Fast Tracking EACPF (%)
Yes	65	55	87	75
No	34	43	10	19
Not sure	1	2	3	6

Source: Uganda, 2007. *Report of the National Consultative Committee on Fast Tracking East African Political Federation*. Kampala: Government Printer, pp 21–53

not participants in the market; the potential marginalization of Uganda by Kenya (the dominant economy in the region); a clear formula that is designed to guide the region on how to share resources; and the issue of corruption and how to eliminate its vices in the society.

The political concerns included the fear of job losses and its inherent marginalization potential. Some of the participants felt that there was a need to transform Uganda into a federal state to accommodate, among others, Buganda and Bunyoro kingdoms before the EAC political federation. It should be noted that in the 1950s Kabaka Mutesa of Buganda Kingdom resisted the plans of the British colonial government to integrate the Uganda colony with the other British colonies in East Africa. Ironically, his opposition to the federation of the colonies led to his exile in England.

Legal and constitutional concerns included the case of the EAC which collapsed in 1977, and that the current EAC treaty took a top-bottom approach because it was concluded without the involvement of Ugandans and the East Africans in general. Other issues of concern were the relationship between the state and federal constitutions, particularly in relation to the devolution of powers; national versus federal state interests; access to federal leadership irrespective of size of state; and gender equity and affirmative action.

The socio-cultural concerns included the possibility of upsurge of crime across the borders; and lack of enthusiasm about Swahili as a spoken and written language in the country, which will give advantage to Kenya and Tanzania.

Environmental concerns included the issue that its management is elitist. The rural communities and the urban poor are largely excluded. They are the main victims of the environmental problems. The participants felt that it would worsen at the EAC federal level.

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Recommendations

The Ugandan NCC included a number of recommendations, which in its view conform to the general spirit of the directives of the summit as well as Wako Committee report:⁷

- With regard to fast tracking EAC federation in general, the NCC recommends overlapping of the four stages of integration provided for in Article 5(2) of the treaty namely, a Customs Union, a Common Market, a Monetary Union and a Political Federation. This would enable parallel activities to take root and be achieved adequately overtime
- The NCC as well as the participants recommended that fast tracking political federation should follow the three stages articulated in the 2004 Wako report: a preparatory phase (2004-2005), a transitional phase to a federation (2005-2009), and a consolidation phase (2010-2013). The envisaged stages in the Wako report are already behind schedule. For instance, commissions and task forces recommended by the Wako committee to manage the issues pertaining to the preparatory phase are yet to be established
- People's involvement in constitutional making is critical for the survival and proper functioning of any country, let alone at the federal level. The NCC recommends the establishment of a constitutional committee to draft the federal constitution for approval in a referendum by the East Africans
- The NCC recommends the idea of popularising Swahili in Uganda to enable the country to communicate with Kenya and Tanzania on equal terms
- To NCC recommends the establishment of what it calls an East African Peer Review Mechanism (EAPRM) akin to the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) responsible for assessing democratization trends in the region
- In order to ensure direct accountability to the East Africans, the NCC recommends the members of the EAC federal parliament and the federal president should be elected by universal adult suffrage

- The educational systems in the region should be harmonised.

Conclusion

The support for the EAC political federation project by Ugandans has provided the Museveni presidency with an opportunity to push integration of the region within the framework of the summit. However, the 27 December 2007 Kenyan electoral debacle and the support President Museveni gave Mwai Kibaki during the crisis has negatively impacted on the project, particularly Museveni's intentions in the region. Uganda was the only EAC member state that immediately recognized the outcome of the elections in Kenya.

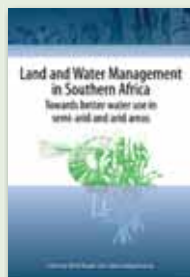
The support for integration of the EAC, particularly econo-political issues, is an added advantage for the leadership of Uganda. Uganda's President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni is known to be an ardent advocate of fast tracking the EAC political federation project within the summit.⁸

Notes and References

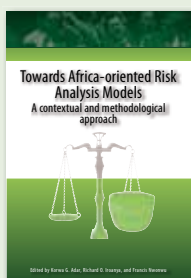
- 1 East African Community, 2002, 'The Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community,' Arusha: EAC Secretariat, Articles 123 (6) and (7).
- 2 For more details on the report submitted by the Wako Committee, see East African Community, 2004 'Report of the Committee on Fast Tracking East African Federation' Arusha: EAC Secretariat.
- 3 East African Community, 2005, 'The East African Community Trade Report 2005,' Arusha: EAC Secretariat, p 6.
- 4 Uganda, 2007, 'The National Consultative Committee on Fast-Tracking the East African Political Federation-Uganda.' Kampala: Government Printer, p 8.
- 5 Uganda 2007, p 7.
- 6 Uganda 2007, pp xii-xvi and pp 54-100.
- 7 Uganda 2007, pp 101-106.
- 8 Kasajja, P Apuuli, 2007. 'The Adoption of the East African Federation Agenda: Impact on Uganda Politics.' Paper Prepared for Presentation at the 10th Workshop on Democratic Transition in East Africa, Paradise Holiday Resort, Bagamoyo, Tanzania, 6-7 September.



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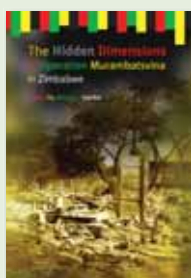
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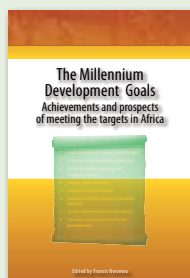
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