

**AFRICAN REGIONAL INTEGRATION SERIES: VOL. 1**

---

# **REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN AN ERA OF POLYCRISIS AND GEOSTRATEGIC COMPETITION IN THE COMESA REGION**

---

**Editors**

**Kizito Sabala, Rosemary Anyona, Oita Etyang**



# **REGIONAL INTEGRATION IN AN ERA OF POLYCRISIS AND GEOSTRATEGIC COMPETITION IN THE COMESA REGION**

## **Authors**

**Kasaija Phillip Apuuli, Japheth Kasimbu, Shazia Chaudhry, Peter Misiani Mwencha,  
Thrity Engineer Mbutia, Susan Onyango Handa, Alice Nyawira Karuri, Adelaide  
Musanga Muchesia, Rachel Ameso Amolo, Edson Ziso**

## **Editors**

**Kizito Sabala, Rosemary Anyona, Oita Etyang**

© COMESA and IRSK, 2025

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or any information storage or retrieval system, without permission from copyright holders. The views contained herein are entirely of the authors and do not in any way represent those of the International Relations Society of Kenya (IRSK), Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) or any of their partners.

ISBN: 978-9982-29-003-6

First edition, first impression 2025

Published by:

Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) and  
International Relations Society of Kenya (IRSK)  
Lusaka, Zambia and Nairobi, Kenya

Cover design: Stanley Murage

Book design and typesetting: Epsilon Publishers Ltd

## Acknowledgements

The editors acknowledge that the publication of this book was the result of a collaborative effort between the International Relations Society of Kenya (IRSK) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). The authors of the papers published herein are commended for their excellent, original, thought-provoking contributions, which have further enriched the field of International Studies. Appreciation also goes to the peer reviewers for their time and intellectual input to ensure the high quality of the product.

The publication was made possible through the financial support from COMESA, the commitment of IRSK senior management, and the design and layout services of Epsilon Publishers Ltd.

# Table of Contents

---

Contributors	vii
Editors	x
Forward	xii
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<hr/>	
<b>Chapter One</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The Deployment of the East African Community Regional Force in the Democratic Republic of Congo</b>	<b>4</b>
Abstract	4
Introduction	4
Context and Conceptual Issues	5
Upheavals in Eastern DRC	6
The Rise of CNDP and M23	6
Security and Defense Cooperation in the EAC	8
Conclusion	12
References	13
<hr/>	
<b>Chapter Two</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>A Critical Analysis of the Nexus Between Environmental Diplomacy and Climate Action in the COMESA Region</b>	<b>20</b>
Abstract	20
Introduction	20
Theoretical Framework	21
Climate Change in the COMESA	22
The COMESA Environmental Regime and Climate Action	22
Multilateralism in the Context of Environmental Diplomacy and Regional Climate Action	25
Environmental Diplomacy and Climate Action	26
The Gaps and Challenges in Policy	30
Conclusion	31
Recommendations	32
References	33

---

<b>Chapter Three</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Nation Branding as a Competitive Identity Tool for COMESA Member States: The Case of Kenya</b>	<b>35</b>
Abstract	35
Introduction	35
Literature Review and Conceptual Frameworks	37
How Kenya has Employed Nation Branding to Enhance Its Competitive Identity	45
Challenges Facing Kenya’s Nation Branding Efforts	48
Conclusion	50
References	51

---

<b>Chapter Four</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Assessing the Policy-Implementation Gap in the Paris Agreement: A Case Study of Kenya and Sudan</b>	<b>56</b>
Abstract	56
Introduction	56
The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement	58
The COMESA and the Climate Action Agenda	58
Theoretical Framework: The Green Theory	59
Kenya and the Climate Action Agenda	60
Sudan and the Climate Action Agenda	67
Conclusion	73
References	74

---

<b>Chapter Five</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>Implementing Chapter Six of the COMESA Treaty for Enhanced Trade Cooperation: A Case Study of Kenya</b>	<b>78</b>
Abstract	78
Introduction	78
Theoretical Framework	79
Implementation of Chapter Six of the COMESA Treaty in Kenya	80
Kenya and the COMESA Region	81
Kenya’s Implementation of Chapter Six of the Treaty	82
Challenges to the Implementation of Chapter Six of the Treaty	85

Implications of Implementing Chapter Six of the COMESA Treaty	89
Lessons Learnt and Best Practices: Policy Recommendations	90
Conclusion	92
References	93
<hr/>	
<b>Chapter Six</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>Party Cartelisation Re-Imaged: Examining Displaced Representation in Political Parties in Africa</b>	<b>96</b>
Abstract	96
Introduction	96
Political Parties: Theory and Evolution	98
The Political Party in Africa	100
The Political Party as a Cartel: Theoretical Framework	103
The Cartel in Action: Political Party Alienation and Plunder	105
Riding on Membership Loyalty and Ignorance to Facilitate Legitimacy	108
Illicit Financial Flows and the Party's Increasingly Intricate Commercial Ties	108
Conclusion	111
References	111
<hr/>	
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>115</b>

## Contributors

**Kasaija Phillip Apuuli** is a Professor of Politics in the Department of Political Science and Public Administration, at Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda. He holds a Master of Laws (LLM), a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) and degree in International Law, from the University of Sussex, United Kingdom. He has been a British Academy Visiting Scholar at the African Studies Centre, University of Oxford (2010) and Fulbright Scholar-in-Residence, Stetson School of Law (Gulfport), Florida (USA) (2016). [philip.kasaija@mak.ac.ug](mailto:philip.kasaija@mak.ac.ug).

**Japheth Kasimbu** is a PhD Candidate in Diplomacy and International Studies at the University of Nairobi, Kenya. He holds a Master's degree in Business Administration (Strategic Management) and a Bachelor of Arts (BA). He works with Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) as an expert in migration and climate diplomacy, where he leads a regional policy programme towards a Free Movement Regime of Persons and Transhumance in the Region. Japheth has over 15 years' working experience with regional, international organizations including the UN. He also serves in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) technical working groups on migration and climate security and has led inter-state diplomatic negotiations where IGAD States adopted regional Protocols on Free Movement of Persons and Transhumance. Japheth has vast experienced and proficiency in conducting social research, partnership building and network, migration governance, disaster risk reduction and resilience building, monitoring and evaluation, strategic planning and negotiations. [jkasimbu@gmail.com](mailto:jkasimbu@gmail.com), [Japheth.Kasimbu@igad.int](mailto:Japheth.Kasimbu@igad.int).

**Shazia Chaudhry** is a Senior Lecturer at the Institute of Diplomacy and International Studies (IDIS), University of Nairobi, Kenya. She is also an associate at the Institute for Climate Change and Adaptation, at the University of Nairobi. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of the Punjab, Pakistan. She holds a Master of Arts (MA) and PhD in International Studies from the University of Nairobi, Kenya. Her areas of research include climate change governance, global security, and environmental diplomacy. She has published a number of articles and research papers on international relations issues. [shazia@uonbi.ac.ke](mailto:shazia@uonbi.ac.ke), [shaziaarc@gmail.com](mailto:shaziaarc@gmail.com).

**Peter Misiani Mwencha** is an experienced lecturer, researcher and consultant with a PhD in Business Administration (Marketing Management). Dr. Mwencha is passionate about advancing public interest issues through evidence-based research, training and advocacy. He is currently a faculty member at the Aga Khan University's Graduate School of Media and Communications (GSMC) in Nairobi, Kenya. [misiani.mwencha@gmail.com](mailto:misiani.mwencha@gmail.com).

**Thrity Engineer Mbuthia** is a marketing professional, educator and leadership coach. She is a PhD student of leadership at the Management University of Africa. Her academic interests are focused on marketing communications and customer experience. She is currently an adjunct faculty at several institutions of higher learning in Nairobi, Kenya. [thritye@gmail.com](mailto:thritye@gmail.com).

**Ms. Susan Onyango Handa** is a seasoned academic and practitioner in International Relations and Diplomacy with ten years of experience in higher education, research, and policy engagement. She is a PhD candidate in International Relations at the United States

International University (USIU) – Africa. She holds a Master’s degree in International Conflict Management from the University of Nairobi and a Bachelor’s degree in International Relations and Diplomacy from Nkumba University, Uganda. She currently serves as a teaching fellow at Strathmore University and has lectured at different institutions in the country. Her research focuses on political economy, development, climate action, fragility in African states, infrastructure development, and public policy analysis. She has several scholarly publications in peer-reviewed journals. [susanhonyango@gmail.com](mailto:susanhonyango@gmail.com).

**Alice Nyawira Karuri** is a lecturer of Development Studies at Strathmore University, Kenya and a Research Fellow at the Strathmore Institute of Public Policy and Governance (IPPG). She holds a PhD in Development Studies from Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology in Kenya, an MA in International Affairs with a concentration in Development from George Washington University, USA and a BA in Economics with a minor in Political Science from Morgan State University, USA. She is a 2020 AfOx (Africa Oxford Initiative) Trade Fellow and a member of the Interdisciplinary Centre for Conservation Science (ICCS), at the University of Oxford, in the Sustainable Food Systems thematic group. Her research focus includes Agricultural Value Chain Analysis, with a focus on farmer empowerment and intra-African trade, sustainability and sovereignty of food systems and public policy development and analysis. She has been the Stakeholder Engagement Lead in the development of national policy and strategy and the Principal Investigator in a collaborative research on the environmental impacts of crop production. [akaruri@strathmore.edu](mailto:akaruri@strathmore.edu).

**Adelaide Musanga Muchesia** is a legal scholar and a certified Trainer of Trainers with a strong background in capacity-building and policy development. She is an Advocate of the High Court of Kenya with over 20 years of experience in legal practice and legal research. She holds a Bachelor of Laws (Special) degree with a focus on Labour Laws and Law of Societies, a Bachelor of Laws (General) degree and a Diploma in Law from the Kenya School of Law. Additionally, she holds a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Public Administration and Social Work, and a Diploma in Personnel Management. Adelaide is passionate about diplomacy and international law, and she actively contributes to regional and national discourse through her writing, training initiatives, and advisory engagements. She has led and contributed to numerous research initiatives focused on governance, constitutionalism, gender justice, international law and the intersection of law and public policy. She is currently serving as Legal Counsel at the Parliamentary Service Commission. Adelaide is also an active member of the Law Society of Kenya (LSK), the Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA)-Kenya, and Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organisation. [adlaidemusangaadvocate@gmail.com](mailto:adlaidemusangaadvocate@gmail.com).

**Hon. Rachel Ameso Amolo, CBS**, is a Member of the Parliamentary Service Commission, a position she has held since 1<sup>st</sup> July 2020. Hon. Ameso is a certified human resource practitioner (CHRP) with over 26 years’ experience. She holds a Masters of Business Administration (MBA) degree in Marketing from Daystar University, a Bachelor’s degree in Entrepreneurship, and a Higher Diploma in Business Management from the Kenya Institute of Management. Hon. Ameso is pursuing PhD in International Studies from the University of Nairobi. As a Commissioner, Hon. Ameso oversees and ensures the effective and efficient functioning of Parliament, constituting offices in the Parliamentary service and

appointing and supervising office holders, preparing annual estimates of expenditure for submission to the National Assembly and exercising budgetary control, and performing other functions necessary for the well-being of Members and staff of Parliament as prescribed by national legislation. Hon. Ameso served in the 11<sup>th</sup> Parliament as a Woman Representative in Kakamega County. She was a legislator with a keen interest in leadership and the empowerment of women and issues affecting women and the girl child. Hon. Ameso is the Chairperson of the Board of Centre for Parliamentary Studies and Training (CPST). Between 2020 and 2022, she was the Chair of the Parliamentary Service Commission Committee on Audit. She spearheads the Performance Management Unit and represents the Parliamentary Service Commission at the Intergovernmental Budget and Economic Council (IBEC) Kenya, which is chaired by the Deputy President of the Republic of Kenya. [amolorachelameso@gmail.com](mailto:amolorachelameso@gmail.com).

**Edson Ziso** teaches in the Department of Politics and International Studies, at the University of Adelaide, South Australia, where he is also a Visiting Research Fellow. Ziso researches and writes on a wide range of issues cutting across politics, governance, foreign policy, race and race relations, decoloniality, environmental politics, South-South and North-South relations, Non-Western International Relations, the political economy of development, and international public policy. Ziso has a special interest in China-Africa relations and has published in this sphere, largely concentrating on the political economy of this relationship. [edson.ziso@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:edson.ziso@adelaide.edu.au).

## Editors

### Kizito Sabala

**Kizito Sabala** holds a PhD in Diplomacy and International Studies and teaches at the Department of Diplomacy and International Studies (DDIS), University of Nairobi. Dr Sabala is also a senior fellow at the Institute for Research and Policy Integration in Africa (IRPIA) Freetown, Sierra Leone. He has more than 18 years of experience in research, training, and facilitation on matters of peace and security in the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes regions of Africa. His recent assignments include serving as the Head of IGAD Liaison offices in Juba, South Sudan and Nairobi, Kenya. He continues to serve as a consultant to various regional and international organisations such as the UN, AU, IGAD, the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC), Accra, Ghana, the International Peace Support Training Centre (IPSTC), Nairobi, Kenya and the Eastern Africa Standby Force (EASF). He has also published extensively in his field of expertise, Diplomacy and International Studies, with research interests in regionalism, violent extremism, human security, international mediation and negotiation. Recent publications include, *Infrastructural Development and Neo-Colonialism in Africa: The Case of the Standard Gauge Railway in Kenya*; *The Role of Internal and External Actors in Shaping Security Dynamics in Somalia and Implications on Long-term Stability* (2024); and *Preventing the spread of Violent Extremism in Africa: An examination of al-Shabaab and Boko Haram and Lessons for Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jama in Mozambique* (2023).

### Rosemary Anyona

**Dr Rosemary Anyona** earned her PhD in International Studies from the Institute of Diplomacy and International Studies at the University of Nairobi in 2013. In 2014, she began teaching at the Institute of Diplomacy and International Studies (IDIS), specialising in Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts courses including International Conflict Management, Foreign Policy Analysis, Theory of Conflict, and International Relations of the Americas, among others. Dr Anyona has also lectured at the Technical University of Kenya, the National Defence College (NDC), the National Intelligence Academy, the Foreign Service Academy, and the Defence Staff College in Kenya. She has written and edited several books, including *Re-Emerging Pan- Africanism: Implications for Foreign and Security Policy*, Vol. 1 (with Makumi Mwagiru), and *Conflict and Mediation in Mozambique and Angola*. She has also penned several papers and book chapters notably; *Kenya's Foreign Policy (2013-2017)* and *African Renaissance, Public Participation in the War on Terrorism: The Case of Kenya*, and *The Mountain Must Go to Mohammed: Reflecting on a Kenyan Public Diplomacy Strategy for Winning the Hearts and Minds of Somalia's Citizenry*. She currently works at the Ministry of Foreign and Diaspora Affairs of the Republic of Kenya.

### Oita Etyang

**Oita Etyang** has over a decade of experience across Sub-Saharan Africa, covering the whole spectrum of conflict and fragility management. He is an expert in systemic peacebuilding, strategic conflict analysis, Country Structural Vulnerability and Resilience Assessment (CSVRA)—areas of specialisation on which he has numerous peer-reviewed

published works in the form of books, book chapters and journal articles. Etyang has designed and implemented programmes on conflict early warning, social cohesion, post-conflict reconstruction, mediation, dialogue and development of National Infrastructure for Peace (I4P). He holds a PhD in Politics from the University of Johannesburg, a Master of Arts in Political Science from the University of Nairobi and a Master of Arts in Managing Peace and Security in Africa from the University of Addis Ababa. He is currently the Head of Governance, Peace and Security in COMESA.

## Forward

The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) States constitutes Africa's largest Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in geographic size and membership. Despite this diversity, the region has sought to contribute to the Pan-Africanist ideals of RECs as the foundational pillars for continental integration. Yet, like other African RECs, COMESA continues to face a host of obstacles in translating the objectives of trade enhancement and economic integration into tangible benefits for its citizens. Forty-four years since it was initially conceived as the Preferential Trade Area (PTA), COMESA still struggles to make advances into higher forms of integration.

In the classical stages of economic integration popularised by Jacob Viner and Bela Balassa, countries proceed through five essential stages in pursuit of integration: free trade area, common market, customs union, monetary union, and political union. While this characterisation captured mostly European integration processes, these stages have become standard templates for measuring the milestones in integration globally.

COMESA made tremendous strides in the establishment of a free trade area and customs union (including the abolition of non-tariff barriers and the establishment of a common external tariff). Nonetheless, these achievements were slowed down by the persistence of economic imbalances, infrastructure bottlenecks, a lack of solid political commitment, and political instability in member countries and across the region. Furthermore, despite the launch of the COMESA Monetary Cooperation Programme with the objective of harmonising fiscal and monetary policies, there has been no measurable progress in achieving macroeconomic convergence, a key prerequisite for a monetary union.

The contributions to *Regional Integration in an Era of Polycrisis and Geostrategic Competition in the COMESA Region* focus on the political, environmental and security constraints that affect the COMESA's integration enterprise. The editors—Kizito Sabala, Rosemary Anyona, and Oita Etyang—suggest that understanding the nature of the complex crises in the security, political, and climate environments in the region requires multiple and eclectic, which the contributors present in this book.

With the exception of the chapter on Kenya's implementation of Chapter Six of the COMESA Treaty for trade cooperation by Adelaide Musanga Muchesia and Rachel Ameso Amolo, the rest of the chapters explore several themes: The deployment of East African regional force in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the nexus between environmental diplomacy and climate action, national branding as a competitive identity tool for COMESA member states, the policy gaps in the implementation of the Paris climate change agreement in Kenya and Sudan, and political cartels in Zimbabwe. Edson Ziso examines the prevalence of cartels in Zimbabwe's politics, which he attributes to the monetisation of politics and the militarisation of the electoral process under the regimes of President Robert Mugabe and Emmerson Mnangagwa. Political cartels are not unique to Zimbabwe. Rather, they symbolise the broad crisis of governance and representation across the COMESA region.

That the book devotes two chapters to climate change underscores the dire consequences of sharp climate variability on integration. For instance, the 2023-2024 prolonged dry spell in Southern Africa, caused by the El Niño climate effect, resulted in the worst food

emergencies in the region, where an estimated 6.5 million people faced starvation. In addition to the faltering of economies and the drying of major river basins, such as the Zambezi, there were interruptions to major infrastructure critical to trade and human mobility. The drought also devastated critical trade and energy infrastructure, reducing cross-border mobility.

Although COMESA has articulated climate mitigation and adaptation measures, the two chapters show the profound gaps in managing the scale of the problem. In a comparative study of Kenya and Sudan, Susan Onyango Handa and Alice Nyawira Karuri argue that, as some of Africa's largest polluters, these countries have a stake in proactive measures to mitigate climate change. However, as largely agricultural societies, they face tremendous obstacles in forging policies that can reduce carbon emissions.

Japheth Kasimbu and Shazia Chaudhry document the diplomatic efforts that led to the COMESA Climate Change Strategy (2020-2030), a major climate change platform. While member states stressed the importance of coordination and collective efforts, hurdles have persisted mainly due to inadequate resources. As a result, none of the COMESA countries is expected to meet their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) as envisaged by the Paris Agreement.

Beyond climate action, COMESA states also employ soft-power strategies to boost competitiveness and integration. Peter Misiani Mwencha and Thrity Engineer Mbutia, using Kenya as a case study, explore how nation branding has been leveraged to promote tourism, attract investment, and expand trade within the COMESA region. They argue that Kenya's global competitiveness depends on a brand that authentically reflects its culture, heritage, and socio-economic realities.

Kasaija Phillip Apuuli examines the deployment of the East African Regional Force (EACRF) at the invitation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) government to stem the insurgency in eastern DRC, unlike the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), which have deployed military forces for peace enforcement and stabilisation attempts. COMESA's efforts in peace and security are limited to monitoring and responding to potential conflicts. The failure of EACRF to meet its stabilisation objectives and its retreat in agronomy a year after its deployment are abject lessons to African RECs: military interventions require careful consultations among the core players in defining the mandates and rules of engagement before deployment.

A region as large as COMESA should inspire more academic analysis of political, economic and security trends to capture both distinctive and common dynamics. Probably because it straddles various RECs, there has not been as much analytical writing on COMESA compared to the EAC or SADC. This book seeks to address this scholarly gap and offer foundational contribution to the study of RECs in Africa.

Gilbert Khadiagala, PhD  
Professor (Emeritus) of International Relations  
Email: [Gilbert.Khadiagala@wits.ac.za](mailto:Gilbert.Khadiagala@wits.ac.za)  
Skype: live:gkhadiag  
ORCID: 0000-0002-3554-8127

## Introduction

This book contains papers presented at the inaugural annual conference of the International Relations Society of Kenya (IRSK), held in October 2023. The conference, themed “*International Relations and Diplomacy in an Era of Polycrisis and Geostrategic Competition in the COMESA Region*”, noted that the COMESA region continues to experience a myriad of crises and challenges that have far-reaching implications on regional integration and development. The simultaneous occurrence of several catastrophic and disastrous events is related to, among others, conflicts, natural and manufactured disasters, economic meltdowns, environmental issues, migrations, globalisation, and humanitarian emergencies. In addition, extra-regional interests (geo-strategic) and competition continue to contribute significantly (either negative or positive) to the nature of the political, economic, and security architecture in the region. A combination of these factors has led to the development of fluid interstate and diplomatic relations among and between the regional states, with far-reaching consequences for the present and future of peace, security, regional integration, and development in COMESA. It is, therefore, important to critically analyse and succinctly understand the implications of the complexity brought about by these factors influencing interstate and diplomatic relations in the sub-region.

A plethora of theoretical, conceptual and practical perspectives from academia, policymakers and practitioners underlie the implications of the different developments on international and diplomatic relations within COMESA. The central theoretical assumption guiding the conference theme was that through a combination of a variety of theories and methodological instruments, it is possible to understand, explain and analyse the causes and consequences of the complex relations that exist among and between states in the COMESA region. It means eclectic and multidisciplinary approaches are important to analyse these factors and their implications for regional peace, security, stability, integration and development. In addition, plausible policy suggestions were made on how to better promote peace, security, stability, integration and development in the sub-region. Effective and sustainable solutions to these crises and challenges require a deep understanding of the issues, approaches, mechanisms, dynamics, and methodologies.

The conference was organised around the following sub-themes: Foreign Policy and Statecraft, Peace and Security, International Law, International Political Economy, Economic Diplomacy, Diaspora Diplomacy, Cultural Diplomacy, and Environmental Diplomacy. It addressed three distinct but interrelated questions: i) how are the various political, economic, and security developments taking place globally and regionally affecting interstate and diplomatic relations in the COMESA region? ii) What should collectively or individually be done to ensure that states, regional organisations and mechanisms can deal with any would-be negative implications of these developments to promote peace, security, stability and development? iii) what are the consequences and/or implications of a failure to effectively address these challenges?

More than 20 papers were presented during the conference. Some of the themes, particularly those relating to peace and security, were published as a special issue of the African Journal on Conflict Resolution (AJCR) Volume 24, Number 3 of 2024 by ACCORD

in South Africa. This book contains six papers focusing on other key themes discussed at the conference.

In **Chapter One**, Kasaija Phillip Apuuli examines the EAC's intervention in eastern DRC, specifically whether regional intervention in an intractable intrastate conflict within a member state lessens violence. In the case of eastern DRC, the author answers the question negatively because the intervention faced many challenges, including funding, differences in the interpretation of the mission's mandate, and toxic regional politics. He concludes that although the unsuccessful EAC intervention ended without consequence, it provides important lessons for the organisation and other regional blocs in Africa seeking to intervene in intractable regional conflicts.

**Chapter Two**, by Japheth Kasimbu and Shazia Chaudhry, provides a critical examination of the relationship between environmental diplomacy and climate action in the sub-region. The impacts of climate change exacerbate vulnerability in a region experiencing high temperatures, variations in rainfall patterns, severe and prolonged droughts and famines, cyclones, flash floods and other climate-related effects. These have serious implications for policy formulation and implementation and are undermined partly due to the scarcity of financial and technological resources. The paper notes that environmental diplomacy remains an important tool for dialogue and multilateralism among state and non-state actors to curb transnational environmental challenges.

Peter Mwencha and Thrity Engineer Mbutia, in **Chapter Three**, provide an interesting account of the importance of nation branding in enhancing a country's image both domestically and internationally—especially in this age of globalisation. Using Kenya as a case study, Mwencha and Mbutia interrogate how Kenya has leveraged nation branding to enhance its competitiveness in terms of attracting tourists, new investments, and enhancing trade, particularly in the COMESA region. They note that the Kenyan government has traditionally taken the lead in initiating and overseeing nation branding efforts, exerting significant influence over strategies, messaging and implementation. They posit that, for Kenya to construct a strong and compelling national brand that is globally competitive, there is a need to bridge the gap between Kenya's national identity and its projected image globally. According to Mwencha and Mbutia, Kenya's nation branding efforts should be based on attributes and characteristics that are authentic, credible, and relevant to Kenya's culture, heritage, and socio-economic context while clearly reflecting unique strengths, values, and aspirations.

In **Chapter Four**, Susan Handa and Alice Karuri discuss the policy-implementation gap within the context of the Paris Agreement. Using a case study of Kenya and Sudan, they argue that while the two countries have endeavoured to enact and implement robust legal and policy frameworks to counter the vagaries of climate change and guarantee the implementation of the Paris Agreement, the policy-implementation gap continues to face a myriad of challenges, including insufficient resources, lack of political will, conflict of interest among stakeholders and competing development priorities that undermine certain laws and policies. They advocate for legal and policy harmonisation, joint action/initiatives towards the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and technology sharing and transfers as a way of addressing gaps and fully implementing the Paris Agreement, especially at the national level.

**Chapter Five**, by Adelaide Musanga and Rachel Ameso, shifts focus into the complexities of trade agreement implementation, which has frequently been identified as the ‘Achilles Heel’ of regional integration in Africa and the greatest barrier to intra-regional trade. A detailed picture is painted of the strategic steps that Kenya, one of the Most Valuable Players (MVPs) in COMESA, has taken to advance the concretisation of a Free Trade Area (FTA) within the twenty-one-member bloc and, by extension, the larger African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The chapter explores Kenya’s adherence to COMESA’s trade liberalisation and development standards, specifically customs reforms, implementation of electronic trading systems, investment in key border infrastructure, and policy reforms. The chapter also examines the challenges Kenya faces in efforts to align its national trade practices with COMESA’s regional integration agenda. The authors then use the identified challenges to highlight lessons other COMESA Member States might learn from Kenya’s experience to accelerate bloc-wide implementation of Chapter Six of the Treaty. The study concludes that domestic policy alignment with regional obligations is a function of political will, commitment to regional obligations, and a clear perception of the nexus between regional integration and the attainment of domestic strategic interests.

In the final section, **Chapter Six**, Edson Ziso argues that the notion of the mass party in Africa, where the public persona is representative of its membership, is a fallacy. Instead, more and more people are increasingly being delinked from national processes, disenfranchised and alienated from governance from the local to the national levels. The paper notes that political parties in Africa are now associated with injustice, exclusion, corruption, nepotism, sexism and many other ills, including internal member displacement when they were ostensibly meant to bring together people with the same political persuasion and serve them in the interests of the common good. The author concludes that a small but powerful elite in the political class, in collusion with certain special economic, political and military interests, has captured and transformed parties into a powerful, vicious cartel whose interests have little to do with the general membership.

# Chapter One

## The Deployment of the East African Community Regional Force in the Democratic Republic of Congo

Kasaija Phillip Apuuli

### Abstract

In November 2022, the East African Community Regional Force was deployed in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo as authorised by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Conclave of the East African Heads of State in April 2022. The regional force was mandated to help contain and, where necessary, fight the negative forces that have continued to cause insecurity in eastern DRC. When the force deployed, it faced many challenges, with the main one being the eventual lack of support from the host government, leading to its withdrawal. Nevertheless, on a positive note, the regional force was able to negotiate a ceasefire between the government of the DRC and the March 23 Movement (M23) insurgent group. This goes to show that regional interventions such as that of the EAC can advance the cause of peace by lessening the occurrence of violence in intractable intra-state conflicts. In the end, however, due to the challenges highlighted in this chapter, including funding and differences in interpretation of the mission's mandate, the EAC regional force withdrew from the DRC only after one year, leaving the security situation in eastern DRC still festering.

**Keywords:** EAC, Eastern DRC, EAC-RF, Negative Forces

### Introduction

The Second Conclave of the East African Community (EAC) Heads of State on the peace and security situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo, held in Nairobi in April 2022 decided to create a regional force made up of troops from partner states. The force was to be deployed to the troubled provinces of North Kivu, South Kivu and Ituri (in the eastern DRC) to help combat insecurity (Government of Kenya, 2021).

Subsequently, at the beginning of September 2022, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the DRC and the Secretary General of the EAC signed an agreement paving the way for the deployment of the EAC Regional Force on the DRC (EACRF-DRC) (Nation Africa, 2022). Specifically, the EAC-RF was mandated 'to help contain, and where necessary, fight the negative forces' that have continued to cause insecurity in eastern DRC (Nation Africa, 2022).

This chapter examines the EAC's intervention in eastern DRC, posing the question: Can regional intervention in an intractable intrastate conflict in a member state lessen the occurrence of violence? In the case of eastern DRC, the question is answered in the negative as the EAC's intervention faced many challenges, including funding, differences

in the interpretation of the EAC's intervention mission mandate and toxic regional politics. In the end, the EAC's intervention ended without consequence. Nevertheless, the lessons learned from the EAC's unsuccessful intervention are useful for other regional blocs in Africa seeking to intervene in intractable regional conflicts.

The chapter argues that while the deployment was able to somewhat lessen the fighting between the armed forces of the DRC government and the M23 insurgents by establishing a ceasefire between them, the mission faced many challenges.

The main one was the eventual lack of support from the host government as a result of a nuanced interpretation of the mission's mandate. Other challenges included funding and the issue of dealing with 'negative groups' such as the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) from Rwanda, the National Liberation Forces (FNL) from Burundi and the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) from Uganda, among others. The term 'negative forces' denotes those non-state armed groups that continue to destabilise regional peace and stability. In the end, however, the EAC-RF was forced to withdraw from eastern DRC one year after its initial deployment.

Methodologically, the paper is a product of reviewing primary documents, including EAC-RF deployment papers, namely, the concept of operations and status of forces agreement, and EAC papers, supplemented by secondary information from books, journal articles and book chapters.

## **Context and Conceptual Issues**

The armed conflict in the DRC is one of the most serious and protracted of any since the Second World War (Okowa, 2006: 205). Although the Republic of Zaire (now DRC) had been in a state of upheaval for most of the 1980s, the roots of the conflict can be traced to 1996, when the first Congo War directed at the overthrow of Mobutu began. This war formally ended in May 1997 with the overthrow of Mobutu and the replacement of his government by that of the Alliance of Forces for the Liberation of Congo (AFDL) led by Laurent Kabila (Okowa, 2006: 208).

The DRC was soon plunged into a second continental war when Kabila's rebel alliance quickly disintegrated. His association with Rwanda began to hurt him politically, and Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda failed to receive the remuneration they expected for helping him topple Mobutu (Clark, 2008: 3). Kabila's former allies remained in the DRC and plundered the country's mineral wealth, often through proxies. In August 1998, a new war began, pitting the Congolese army against rebel forces supported by Rwanda and Uganda (Reyntjens, 1999: 241-250). Subsequently, the war drew in forces from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries of Angola, Namibia and Zimbabwe, as well as Chad, Libya and Sudan (Reyntjens, 1999: 241-250). Following the conclusion of the Lusaka Agreement (United Nations, 1999) by the warring parties, the war entered a stalemate.

In 2002, the Sun City Peace Agreement was signed following the Inter-Congolese Dialogue (Inter-Congolese Political Negotiations, 2003). The agreement provided for power-sharing between the armed fighting groups and un-armed civilian elements, while retaining President Joseph Kabila in office to lead the transitional government until the elections

scheduled for 2006. While the signing of the agreement resulted in the larger part of the country experiencing peace, the provinces of Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu have hitherto remained restive.

## Upheavals in Eastern DRC

Eastern DRC, in particular, has been the epicentre of conflicts since the elements who allegedly committed the genocide against the Tutsis in Rwanda crossed into the area in 1994. The insecurity emanates from the continued presence of numerous rebel and militia groups, sometimes supported by the neighbouring countries (Apuuli, 2011-2012: 326). The groups have continued to exploit the existing mineral and other natural wealth to fund their existence and activities (Apuuli, 2011-2012: 326).

Tensions among different ethnic groups in the Kivus have remained consistently high. The spillover of Hutu-Tutsi antagonisms from the Rwandan genocide, combined with the involvement of the Rwanda Patriotic Forces (RPF) in the DRC, further exacerbated the situation and exposed the weakness of the Kinshasa government in managing conflicts in the eastern provinces. Rwanda's presence in the Kivus, together with the 'failed' national political transition in the DRC, have been identified as the main drivers of persistent violence and instability in the region (Clark, 2008: 4). Moreover, for years neighbouring states, particularly Rwanda and Uganda, have relied on both local militias in eastern DRC and foreign armed groups as proxies (ICG, 2022). The emergence of the *Congrès National de la Défense du Peuple* (CNDP) and the subsequent M23 insurgencies illustrate this dynamic.

## The Rise of CNDP and M23

In July 2006, motivated to protect the Kinyarwanda Tutsi population against the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) as well as other anti-Tutsi groups such as Mayi Mayi, General Laurent Nkunda officially established the CNDP. Between 2006 and 2008, the CNDP engaged in several rounds of fighting with the Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo (FARDC), the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the Mayi Mayi.

In November 2007 and January 2008, the Nairobi and Goma agreements launched the Amani Pact (*Pact d'engagement*) (Digitaldjei, 2014; Boshoff and Hoebeke, 2008) aimed at addressing the issues of the rise of militias, demilitarisation and the repatriation of internally displaced persons in eastern DRC. The significance of the Pact is double-pronged: first, it was signed by the DRC government and 23 rebel groups, and second, it dealt with key issues that were not adequately dealt with in the previous agreements. Nevertheless, although the Pact required the CNDP to undertake disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) and to transform into a political party, it failed to do so. In fact, the CNDP turned the province of North Kivu into its domain by mobilising well over 4,000 combatants (Alden et al., 2011: 113), resulting in its morphing into the M23 group.

In January 2009, the CNDP split due to a disagreement on the integration of its forces into the formal national security structures of the DRC. Subsequently, on 23 March 2009, the DRC government and the CNDP reached a peace agreement (United Nations,

2009), which, among others, provided for the transformation of the group into a political movement. However, the CNDP was given limited access to the political arena. Thus, the shaky implementation of the 23 March 2009 agreement formed one of the reasons for a new rebellion in North Kivu in May 2012, led by the M23.

The M23 group was militarily defeated by the combined forces of FARDC and MONUSCO. Its fighters fled to Uganda and Rwanda, where they were disarmed and placed in cantonment camps (van de Walle, 2022). In December 2013, the M23 group and the DRC government signed the Nairobi Declarations following Uganda's mediation (BBC News, 2013), which were not implemented. Nevertheless, to a small extent, the signing of the declarations resulted in limited repatriation of M23 fighters back to the DRC (Senior official, ICGLR Secretariat, 2016), and the establishment of a national committee for monitoring the implementation of the declarations among others (M23, 2014). Nonetheless, the intensification of the M23 activities prompted the leaders of the EAC regional bloc to suggest the deployment of the EAC-RF under the theory of liberal peacebuilding, which promotes the use of armed force to advance liberal norms and values (Baciu, Ostermann and Wagner, 2024: 1).

Fukuyama has argued that “weak and failing states have arguably become the single most important problem for international order” (Fukuyama, 2004: 92). Thus, the theory of liberal peacebuilding advocates for the promotion of democracy, market-based economic reforms, and the establishment of institutions akin to Western-style modern states, acting as a driving force for consolidating long-term stability in war-torn societies (Newman et al., 2009: 3).

Liberally constructed societies are more likely to exhibit domestic stability and coherence in their overall foreign policy conduct, a vibrant civil society and multilateralism all of which are elements applicable to laying a strong foundation for the stable state-building project (Newman et al., 2009: 3). Generally, the liberal peacebuilding theory emphasises the use of formal external bodies and institutions such as the UN, African Union (AU) and regional intervention forces to terminate violent conflict, restore state authority and enhance capacity (Paris, 2004).

Critics of the liberal peacebuilding approach point to several facts that adversely affect it. First, liberal peacebuilding strategies fail to connect with their target populations, end up buttressing problematic elites and their often chauvinistic, nationalistic, or personal interests, and so lack a connection in context, on the ground, amongst populations which have their own understandings of identity, sovereignty, institutions, rights, law and needs according to their own socio-historical and cultural traditions and context (Richmond, 2014: 378-400).

Second, liberal institutional frameworks are externally designed with a European or northern, developed and individualistic context in mind and do not include urgent responses to economic needs. Thus, they fail to provide public services quickly enough to undercut currents of violence and root causes of conflict (Richmond, 2014: 378-400).

Third, the legitimacy of international peacebuilding (or key components of it) is also challenged by the perception of a lack of “local ownership” and local consultation in international peacebuilding. It is also challenged by its elements of coercion (either overt or subtle), and by the apparent lack of accountability that has accompanied some forms of peacebuilding (Newman et al., 2009: 13).

Recent peacebuilding approaches, however, have largely been based on the liberal theory, including the EAC's involvement in eastern DRC.

## **Security and Defense Cooperation in the EAC**

The EAC's engagement in matters of peace and security (such as the deployment of the EAC-RF) is grounded in several normative and institutional frameworks. These frameworks lay a firm foundation for the establishment and institutionalisation of procedures, mechanisms, tools, and methods to predict, forewarn, prevent and manage tensions to forestall violent conflicts.

The Treaty Establishing EAC (1999) (as amended), in particular articles 124 (cooperation in political matters- regional peace and security) and 125 (cooperation in defence); the Protocol on Peace and Security (2013); the EAC Conflict Management Act (2012) which was concluded as part of the EAC Conflict Prevention, Management, and Resolution Mechanism (CPMR) (2012); the 6<sup>th</sup> EAC Development Strategy 2021/22-2025/26; and the EAC Vision (2050) provide the normative and legal basis of the EAC's intervention in matters of peace and security. The DRC became a full partner state of the EAC on 11 July 2022 (EAC, 2022b), thus becoming part of this legal and normative framework.

The remainder of the chapter discusses the Achilles heel of the mission, including the issues of interpretation of its mandate, funding, and the issue of negative forces, among others.

### **a) Interpretation of the Mission Mandate**

The EAC-RF was mandated 'to help contain, and where necessary, fight the negative forces' that have continued to cause insecurity in eastern DRC. Indeed, when the force was first deployed, it first secured the most critical infrastructure of Goma town and airport (Kyama, 2022), and second, facilitated the negotiation of a ceasefire between the DRC armed forces and the insurgents of M23 (France 24, 2022; UN, 2023). Nevertheless, the latter became tenuous as the DRC forces and M23 subsequently resumed fighting (Bagala, 2023).

The other complicating factor was the demand by the DRC government that the EAC-RF start engaging the M23 insurgents militarily in fulfilment of its mandate (Ilunga, 2023). When the EAC-RF declined to launch military operations against the M23, President Tshisekedi accused it of 'cohabiting' with the rebels (Ilunga, 2023). The EAC-RF leadership counter-argued that its mandate was peacekeeping and protection of civilians, supporting the political track to encourage dialogue (Ilunga, 2023), and not to engage in kinetic military operations against the insurgents.

Due to differences in the force's mandate, the DRC government (the host government) began demanding the force's withdrawal from eastern DRC (Ilunga, 2023). Ultimately, the EAC-RF withdrew at the end of 2023, but not before the DRC government invited the SADC to replace it, with the expectation that the latter would engage the M23 insurgents in combat (Rose, 2023). In fact, at the signing of the agreement with SADC to deploy forces,

President Tshisekedi observed that the SADC force ‘would help to annihilate the enemies of [the DRC]’ (Rose, 2023). President Tshisekedi’s belief could have been informed by the fact that in 2013, forces from the SADC region under MONUSCO had helped defeat the M23 insurgents (Rono, 2013).

The SADC Mission in the DRC (SAMIDRC) (*Operation Thiba*) started deploying on 15 December 2023 to support the government of the DRC in restoring peace and security in eastern DRC (SADC, 2024a). The deployment of the SAMIDRC was approved by the Extraordinary SADC Summit of Heads of State and Government held in Windhoek, Republic of Namibia, on 08 May 2023 as a regional response to address the unstable and deteriorating security situation prevailing in the eastern DRC (SADC, 2024a).

SAMIDRC draws forces from the Republics of Malawi, South Africa, and the United Republic of Tanzania and elements of the DRC Armed Forces-FARDC (SADC, 2024a). Since deployment, the SAMIDRC forces have suffered casualties, including several South African and Tanzania military elements killed or injured as a result of encounters with insurgents in eastern DRC (DW News, 2024; SADC, 2024b)). So far, the deployment of the SAMIDRC has largely not lessened the insecurity in eastern DRC.

## **b) Funding**

The EAC-RF’s concept of operations (CONOPS) stated that each partner state/troop contributing country (PS/TCC) would fund its own contingent (EAC, 2022a). However, due to the economic difficulties experienced by the contributing countries, the EAC-RF became economically unsustainable. The states of the region could not afford to fund the mission.

For example, Kenya’s Defence Cabinet Secretary at the time, Aden Duale, announced that Kenya’s deployment in the Regional Force (RF) would cost Kenya Shillings (KES) 4.5 billion (United States dollars (USD) 35.5 million at the then prevailing rate) for the first six months, rising to KES 7.2 billion (USD 58.4 million) for a one-year deployment. He further acknowledged the strain this placed on the national budget, noting that “we are not sure whether we [can afford the deployment]” (The Star, 2022).

On the other hand, the Republic of South Sudan contributed 750 personnel to the EAC-RF (Aljazeera, 2022; Africanews, 2022), with the initial price tag of the deployment at USD 6.69 million (Xinhua, 2022). From the very start, the South Sudan deployment ‘[was] mired in confusion’ (Janefer, 2022) as it was not clear where the money would come from. Nevertheless, the South Sudan contingent deployed to eastern DRC amidst funding uncertainties.

According to the World Bank, the economic outlook of both Kenya and South Sudan were unfavourable at the time they deployed forces to the EAC-RF (World Bank Group, 2022; World Bank Group, 2022a). The World Bank reported that both countries’ economies had contracted as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (World Bank Group, 2022a; World Bank Group, 2022b).

The funding problems that befell the EAC-RF initiative should generally be viewed from the context of failure of many African continental and regional initiatives due to the issue of funding. Konare and Amoako have succinctly observed:

“...Africa’s integration cannot be funded solely by the traditionally unreliable financial contributions of the Partner States or outside support. Relying principally on assessed contributions has proven unsustainable for regional economic communities...” (Apuuli, 2010: 115).

The example of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) that was launched in January 2007 is instructive. The mission was mandated *inter alia* to support Somalia’s fragile peace process and protect the individuals involved in it; help the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) to consolidate its authority in Mogadishu; and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance and the repatriation of displaced persons (UN Security Council, 2007). AMISOM’s initial financial costs fell directly on the Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs), and initially, they were only two- Uganda and Burundi.

The AU itself struggled to finance the mission and thus relied on financial assistance from the European Union (EU), several Western states, and later the UN (Williams, 2009: 514-530). While the mission did not withdraw, payment of AMISOM has been very problematic, with the serving personnel going for months without receiving their salaries and allowances (Byaruhanga, 2016; Barigaba, 2023).

### **c) Negative Forces**

Eastern DRC is inhabited by many insurgent groups, with some estimates putting the number at around 200 (BBC Africa Daily, 2023). Most of these groups are either aligned with the DRC government or with the neighbouring countries, mainly Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda, as proxies. The issue of disarming the non-state armed groups that seek to destabilise regional peace and stability (negative forces) was first dealt with under the Lusaka Agreement (1999), which called for the establishment of “a mechanism for disarming militias and armed groups, including the genocide forces” (Article III, clause 22).

Just as it was difficult to resolve the issue of the negative groups under the Lusaka Agreement, the EAC-RF likewise faced challenges arising from the fact that “particular armed groups in the eastern DRC are so intertwined with armed forces of neighbouring states” (Sheeran and Case, 2014: 6). For example, reports indicate that some of the negative forces receive support and fight alongside government forces of the DRC (HRW, 2022). Ultimately, as MONUSCO, the EAC-RF failed to neutralise armed groups. This was due, first, to the fact that such action was not its primary responsibility, and second, to the inherent difficulty of identifying negative forces in a context such as eastern DRC.

There was a possibility that the negative forces could be dealt with under the Nairobi process. The Nairobi process was launched in April 2022 as the political track of the region’s intervention in eastern DRC. It was aimed at persuading the armed groups in eastern DRC to lay down their arms and join the political process (EAC, n.d.). The process seeks to engage all stakeholders, including the DRC government, armed groups, civil society organisations, and the international community in finding a peaceful resolution to the conflict through dialogue and negotiation (EAC, n.d.). Former President of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta, was appointed the facilitator of the Nairobi process and, in that capacity,

convened three inter-Congolese dialogue meetings involving the DRC government, civil rights groups, community and religious leaders and armed groups (The Star, 2022).

In December 2022, 53 Congolese armed groups met in Nairobi and agreed to lay down their arms (Wambui, 2022). Under the Nairobi process, the foreign armed groups, such as the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) and Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) from Uganda, Red Tabara from Burundi, and the FDLR from Rwanda, are supposed to be repatriated to their states of origin after disarmament (Wambui, 2022). Unfortunately, some of these foreign armed groups continue to commit atrocities in eastern DRC (Reuters, 2024).

#### **d) 'Toxic' Regional Politics**

The relationship between Uganda and Rwanda took a turn for the worse in 2018 as Kigali levelled several accusations against Kampala, including Ugandan security agencies targeting Rwandans living in Uganda for deportation and a Rwandan rebel outfit called Rwanda National Congress (RNC) led by renegade General Kayumba Nyamwasa recruiting in Uganda to destabilise Rwanda (Mpagi and Musisi, 2020). Uganda, in turn, accused Rwanda of meddling in its internal affairs, including infiltrating its security (Green, 2018). Both countries denied accusations levelled against them. A summit meeting in March 2018 between Presidents Museveni and Kagame did not stem the rumours (Kagame, 2018). In early 2022, relations between the two states somewhat thawed following the re-opening of their common border (The Conversation, 2022).

The bilateral relations between Burundi and Rwanda began to sour in 2013 when Rwanda accused Burundi of hosting Rwandan insurgents who it alleged crossed into the country following the defeat of the M23 by the UN's Force Intervention Brigade (FIB) in 2013. Relations worsened following President Nkurunziza's decision to run for a third term, leading many of his critics in Burundi to flee to Rwanda (The Conversation, 2016). In May 2015, General Godefroid Niyombare attempted to overthrow Nkurunziza, a bid that failed and allegedly was supported by Rwanda (Craig, 2015). In June 2018, it was alleged that Burundian security forces and their proxies launched an armed attack in the Nyabimata Sector of Rwanda's Southern Province (Mugisha, 2020). Just like Rwanda and Uganda's bilateral relations, Burundi and Rwanda's relations somewhat thawed in 2021 (Kanyange, 2021).

In 2022, relations between the DRC and deteriorated sharply, as each country accused the other of supporting the insurgent group. The DRC alleged that Rwanda was backing the M23 rebels, while Rwanda countered that the DRC was collaborating with the FDLR insurgents. The mutual accusations led to the severance of diplomatic ties between the two countries. The UN later lent credence to claims that both countries were, in fact, supporting each other's insurgencies (Price, 2023).

The allegations escalated with the DRC accusing Rwanda of plotting to shoot down President Tshisekedi's plane (Fitsanakis, 2023), an allegation that was denied by Rwanda. Thus, building trust and confidence between the regional countries became the most difficult task of the EAC-RF (Sawyer, 2022). In fact, the demand by the DRC for the withdrawal of the EAC-RF was occasioned by the force's failure to fight the M23 insurgents, who are allegedly supported by Rwanda (Fleming and Bikorimana, 2024).

## e) Previous Interventions

Previously, regional states have intervened in eastern DRC in particular and DRC in general, unilaterally, bilaterally and multilaterally (as part of, for example, MONUSCO). Examples of unilateral interventions include, for example, Uganda and Rwanda in the late 1990 to early 2000s. Bilateral interventions include, for example, Uganda and DRC launching joint operations against the ADF at the end of November 2021 following the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU). Some regional states like Kenya and Tanzania have contributed troops under MONUSCO (Ministry of Defence, 2021; defenceWeb/UN, 2013). However, it must be noted that these interventions have not elicited the total support of the DRC population. Uganda's and Rwanda's unilateral interventions in the DRC resulted in clashes between their forces in the city of Kisangani, which left thousands of Congolese civilians dead (Associated Press, 2000).

The DRC and Uganda's latest joint military operations (Congo Research Group and Ebuteli, 2022) that started in late 2021, specifically against the ADF rebels, resulted in the displacement, maiming and killing of civilians by the armed groups. For example, between 16 March and 14 August 2022, ADF conducted 99 attacks, killing more than 541 civilians, mainly in the provinces of Ituri and North Kivu (United Nations, 2022). Other armed groups also continued to target civilians, with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights observing that "...61% of human rights violations have been committed by them" (United Nations, 2022).

Also, the intervention of the UN did not result in the pacification of the country. First deployed in the year 2000 to, among others, supervise the implementation of the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement (United Nations, 1999), MONUC/MONUSCO's mandate was expanded to include the protection of civilians (UN Security Council, 2010), but the force has come under attack for its failure to carry out its mandate. The very civilians it is supposed to protect have accused the force of failing to protect them from armed groups' attacks (Reuters, 2022; Zounmenou, 2021).

On the other hand, the EAC-RF seemed (or so it was thought) to have hit the ground running. For example, its elements deployed in Goma vowed that the city would never fall into the hands of the M23 rebel group, as it happened in November 2012 (AFP, 2022b). In addition, the force conducted patrols in areas where M23 rebels had been pushed out (Kiongozi, n.d.). Thus, the EAC-RF seemed to be on the right footing (cf. AFP, 2022a). Moreover, within the larger context of the EAC intervention in eastern DRC, at the end of November 2022, the M23 group announced a ceasefire (cessation of hostilities) (AFP, 2022c). Note that the ceasefire broke down after a few days as fighting resumed between M23 rebels and government forces. However, the truce considerably reduced the prevalence of violence, especially against the civilian population.

## Conclusion

In November 2022, the EAC-RF deployed in eastern DRC but withdrew after just one year. The EAC-RF was mandated to help contain and, where necessary, fight the negative forces that have continued to cause insecurity in eastern DRC. This chapter has discussed

the EAC-RF's deployment from the point of view of the challenges it faced, thus leading to its withdrawal. The challenges highlighted include funding, differences in the interpretation of the mission's mandate and toxic regional politics, among others. The chapter has also nevertheless observed that the regional force was able to somewhat lessen the violence in eastern DRC, demonstrating that regional interventions in intrastate conflicts can help advance the cause of peace. However, the EAC-RF was not successful in its intervention, thus providing a great lesson on how not to conduct regional intervention by regional organisations.

## References

- Africanews. (2022). *South Sudan announces deployment of 750 soldiers to eastern DRC*. Africanews, 28 December 2022. Available at: <https://www.africanews.com/2022/12/28/south-sudan-announces-deployment-of-750-soldiers-to-eastern-drc/#:~:text=South%20Sudan%20announced%20on%20Wednesday%20the%20deployment%20of,that%20includes%20forces%20from%20Kenya%2C%20Burundi%20and%20Uganda> (visited 19 December 2023).
- Agence France-Presse (AFP). (2022a). *Residents of eastern Congo reject EAC force*, *The East African*, 22 June 2022. Available at: <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/news/east-africa/residents-of-eastern-congo-reject-eac-regional-force-3855950> (visited 17 December 2023).
- Agence France-Presse (AFP). (2022b). *No one will take GOMA, says East Africa commander in DRC*. Monitor, 16 November 2022. Available at: <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/no-one-will-take-goma-says-east-africa-commander-in-drc-4022960> (visited 19 December 2023).
- Agence France-Presse (AFP). (2022c). *Cease-fire holding in eastern DR Congo, residents say*. Monitor, 27 November 2022. Available at: <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/ceasefire-holding-in-eastern-dr-congo-residents-say-4035074> (visited 19 December 2023).
- Alden, C., Thakur, M. and Arnold, M. (2011). *Militias and the Challenges of Post-conflict Peace: Silencing the Guns*. Zed Books.
- Aljazeera. (2022). *South Sudan to send 750 troops to join regional force in DRC*. Aljazeera, 5 December 2022. Available at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/12/5/south-sudan-to-send-750-troops-for-regional-force-in-congo> (visited 20 December 2023).
- Apuuli, K.P. (2010). Assessment of Institutional Developments in the East African Community (EAC): 1999-2009. In Rok Ajul (ed.), *A Region in Transition- Towards a New Integration Agenda in East Africa.*, Midrand: Institute of Global Dialogue, 99-133.
- Apuuli, K.P. (2011-2012). *The use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles and United Nations Peacekeeping: The case of MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)*. African Yearbook of International Law, 19, 359-376.
- Baciu, C., Ostermann, F., and Wagner, W. (2024). *The crisis of liberal interventionism and the return of war*. Politics and Governance Vol. 12.

Bagala, A. (2023). *EAC forces on edge as M23 Congolese forces resume fight*. Monitor, 13 November 2023. Available at: <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/eac-forces-on-edge-as-m23-congolese-forces-resume-fight-4431854> (visited 6 October 2024).

Barigaba, J. *Atmis troops demand pay arrears as Somalia mission nears end*. The East African, 5 February 2023. Available at: <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/news/east-africa/who-is-hoarding-pay-for-somalia-peacekeepers-4111048> (visited 7 October 2024).

BBC News. (2013). *DR Congo government 'signs deal with M23 in Kenya'*. 12 December. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-25357821> (visited 23 December 2023).

BBC Africa Daily. (2023). *Why are there so many armed groups in eastern DRC?* BBC News, 19 January. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0dx9z25> (visited 23 December 2023).

Boshoff, H. and Hoebeke, H. (2008). *Situation Report: Peace in the Kivu's? An analysis of the Nairobi and Goma Agreements*. Institute for Security Studies, 30 July. Available at: <https://issafrica.org/research/situation-reports/situation-report-peace-in-the-kivus-an-analysis-of-the-nairobi-and-goma-agreements-henri-boshoff-and-hans-hoebeke>.

Byaruhanga, C. (2016). *African Union troops in Somalia not paid for six months*. BBC Africa, Somalia, 27 June. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-36624520> (visited 7 October 2024).

Clark, P. (2008). *Ethnicity, Leadership and Conflict Mediation in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo: The Case of the Barza Inter-Communaire*. Journal of Eastern African Studies 2(1), 1-17.

Congo Research Group and Ebuteli. (2022). *Uganda's Operation Shujaa in the DRC: Fighting the ADF or Securing Economic Interests?* New York: Center on International Cooperation. Available at: <https://cic.nyu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/report-crg-ebuteli-uganda-operation-shujaa-drc-adf-securing-economic-interests-1.pdf> (visited 8 October 2024).

Craig, J. (2015). *Relations between Burundi, Rwanda Deteriorating*. VOA News, 14 October. Available at: <https://www.voanews.com/a/relations-between-burundi-and-rwanda-deteriorating/3005623.html> (visited 28 December 2023).

defenceWeb/UN. (2013). *First Tanzanian elements of UN intervention brigade arrive in DRC*. defenceWeb, 13 May. Available at: <https://www.defenceweb.co.za/joint/diplomacy-a-peace/first-tanzanian-elements-of-un-intervention-brigade-arrive-in-drc/>.

Digitaldjei. (2014). *Goma conference on Peace and Security (January 2008) Document*. 16 April. Available at: <https://digitaldjei.com/2014/goma-conference-on-peace-and-security-january-2008-document/> (visited 5 January 2024).

DW News. (2024). *South African soldiers killed in DR Congo attack*. 15 February. Available at: <https://www.dw.com/en/south-african-soldiers-killed-in-dr-congo-attack/a-68263468> (visited 7 October 2024).

East African Community (EAC). (n.d.). *Overview of the EAC-led Nairobi Process*. Available at: <https://www.eac.int/nairobi-process-about/overview> (visited 7 October 2024).

East African Community (EAC). (2022a). *Concept of Operations (CONOPS) for the Deployment of the East African Community Regional Force in the DRC, adopted at Arusha*. EAC document, June 19 (on file and available from the author).

East African Community (EAC). (2022b). *The Democratic Republic of the Congo finally becomes the 7<sup>th</sup> EAC Partner State*. EAC Press Release, 11 July. Available at: <http://www.eac.int/press-releases/2526-the-democratic-republic-of-the-congo-finally-becomes-the-7th-eac-partner-state> (visited 7 January 2024).

Fitsanakis, J. (2023). *Congo accuses Rwandan spy cell of plot to shoot down president's plane*. intelNews.org, 4 January. Available at: <https://intelnews.org/2023/01/04/03-166/> (visited 30 January 2024).

Fleming, L. and Bikorimana, D. (2024). *Two armies accused of backing DR Congo's feared rebels*. BBC News and BBC Great Lakes, 9 July. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c134kgd6do> (visited 7 October 2024).

France 24. (2022). *African leaders 'agree on ceasefire' in violence-torn eastern DR Congo*. 23 November. Available at: <https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20221123-african-leaders-agree-on-ceasefire-in-violence-torn-eastern-dr-congo> (visited 5 October 2024).

Fukuyama, F. (2004). *State-Building: Governance and World Order in the 21st Century*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Government of Kenya. (2021). *Communique – The Second Heads of State Conclave on the Democratic Republic of Congo, adopted at Nairobi*. Government of Kenya Document, 21 April.

Green, A. (2018). *Renewed Tensions Between Uganda and Rwanda Will Ripple Across East Africa*. World Politics Review, 7 May. Available at <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/renewed-tensions-between-uganda-and-rwanda-will-ripple-across-east-africa/> (visited 30 January 2024)

Human Rights Watch (HRW). (2022). *Dr Congo: Army Units Aided Abusive Armed Groups*. 18 October. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/10/18/dr-congo-army-units-aided-abusive-armed-groups> (visited 30 January 2024).

Ilunga, P. (2023). *Tshisekedi to East African force: Act on rebels or leave DRC*. The East African, 10 May. Available at: <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/news/east-africa/tshisekedi-gives-ultimatum-to-eacrf-4229574> (visited 6 October 2024).

Inter-Congolese Political Negotiations. (2003). *The Final Act: Inter-Congolese Political Negotiations—The Suncity Agreement, 2 April 2003*. Available at: <https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/default/files/document/files/2024/05/cd030402suncityagreement.pdf> (visited 2 April 2024).

International Crisis Group (ICG). (2022). *Easing the Turmoil in the Eastern DR Congo and Great Lakes*. 25 May. Available at: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/great-lakes/democratic-republic-congo-uganda-burundi-rwanda/easing-turmoil-eastern-dr-congo> (visited 2 October 2024).

Senior official, ICGLR Secretariat. (2016). *Interview*, Nairobi, 5 December.

Janefer, K. (2022). *South Sudan tight-lipped on DRC military mission*. Africa Press, 10 November. Available at: <https://www.africa-press.net/south-sudan/all-news/south-sudan-tight-lipped-on-drc-military-mission> (visited 2 February 2024).

Kagame, P. (2018). *President Kagame and President Museveni joint press conference*. Entebbe, 25 March 2018. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YayaGHJKOAK>.

Kanyange, M. (2021). *Two African neighbours give peace a chance*. Development and Cooperation (D+C), 18 July. Available at: <https://www.dandc.eu/en/article/rwanda-and-burundi-are-normalising-relations-after-nearly-six-year-dispute> (visited 5 February 2024).

Kiongozi. (n.d.). *M23 suffers in Goma DRC as KDF exposes rarely seen weapons to end terrorists*. OperaNews, <https://ke.opera.news/ke/en/politics/d2b1e3b3059a6c1dee048d-7eff09eef0> (visited 5 February 2024).

Kyama, E. (2022). *Kenyan troops take control of Goma airport*. Pulse Uganda, 18 November. Available at: <https://www.pulse.ug/news/kenyan-troops-take-control-of-gomaairport/p18cypq#:~:text=This%20follows%20Kenyan%20troops%20taking%20strategic%20control%20of%20Goma,%20including> (visited 5 October 2024).

M23. (2014). *Decision No. 025/PRES-M23/2014*, 12 March (on file with the author).

Ministry of Defense. (2021). *Kenya set to deploy – MONUSCO*. Kenya Army, 27 April. Available at: <https://mod.go.ke/news-releases/kdf-set-to-deploy-monusco/#:~:text=In%20line%20with%20UN%20Member%20State%20obligations%2C%20Kenya,to%20MONUSCO%20under%20the%20UNSC%20Resolution%202556%20%282020%29> (visited 15 March 2024).

Mpagi, C. M. and Musisi, F. (2020). *Rwanda, Uganda relations souring amid claims of arrests, deportations*. The East African, 6 July. Available at: <http://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/ea/Rwanda-Uganda-relations-souring-4552908-4738872-p7pm93/index.html> (visited 15 March 2024).

Mugisha, I.R. (2020). *No end to Rwanda-Burundi spat*. The East African, 6 July. Available at: <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/news/east-africa/no-end-to-rwanda-burundi-spat-1400944> (visited 15 March 2024).

Nation Africa. (2022). *DRC signs troop deployment deal with East African Community*. Monitor, 9 September. Available at: <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/drc-signs-troop-deployment-deal-with-east-african-community-3943474> (visited 20 March 2024).

Newman, E., Paris, R. and Richmond, O.P. (2009). 'Introduction', in E. Newman, R. Paris and O. Richmond (eds.). *New Perspectives on Liberal Peace-building*. Tokyo: UN University Press, 3-25.

Okowa, P.N. (2006). *Congo's War: The Legal Dimension of a Protracted Conflict*. British Yearbook of International Law 77(1), 203-255.

The Star. (2022). *It'll cost Kenya Sh7.2 billion a year in DRC peace mission – Duale*. 17 November. Available at: <https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2022-11-17-itll-cost-kenya-sh72-billion-a-year-in-drc-peace-mission-duale/> (visited 1 April 2024).

Paris, R. (2004). *At War's End: Building Peace after Civil Conflict*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

- Price, N. (2023, January 4). *Statement on Report by UN Group of Experts*. Available at: <https://www.state.gov/statement-on-report-by-un-group-of-experts/> (visited 2 April 2024).
- Reuters. (2022). *DRC Civilians Attack MONUSCO Convoy*. VOA Africa, 2 November. Available at: <https://www.voaafrica.com/a/drc-civilians-attack-monusco-convoy/6816523.html> (visited 5 April 2024).
- Reuters. (2024). *Suspected ADF kill more than 80 in eastern DRC in one week*. Monitor, 10 June. Available at: <https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/suspected-adf-kill-more-than-80-in-eastern-drc-in-one-week-4652918> (visited 7 October 2024).
- Reyntjens, F. (1999). *Briefing: The Second Congo War: More than a Remake*. African Affairs 98(391), 241-250.
- Richmond, O.P. (2014). *Failed state building versus peace formation*. Cooperation and Conflict 48 (3), 378-400.
- Rono, M. (2013). *M23's decline raises hopes of DR Congo peace*. BBC News, 4 November. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-24802888.amp> (visited 6 October 2024).
- Rose, E. (2023). *DR Congo Signs Agreement for SADC Troop Deployment*. allAfrica, Available at: <https://africa.com/stories/202311200402.html#:~:text=President%20Felix%20Tshisekedi%20of%20DR%20Congo%20signed%20an%20agreement%20in> (visited 6 October 2024).
- SADC. (2024a). *SAMIDRC Deployment of the SADC Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo*. Press Release, 4 January. Available at: <https://www.sadc.int/sites/default/files/2024-01/SAMIDRC%20Deployment%20-%20Press%20Release.pdf> (visited 6 October 2024).
- SADC. (2024b). *Four SAMIDRC soldiers died and three injured in eastern DRC*, Press Release. Goma, [https://x.com/SADC\\_News/status/1777322172379283932](https://x.com/SADC_News/status/1777322172379283932) (visited 7 October 2024).
- Sawyer, K. (2022). *Can the East African Community stabilise eastern DRC?* Institute for Security Studies (ISS), 1 November. Available at: <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/can-the-east-african-community-stabilise-eastern-drc> (visited 7 October 2024).
- Sheeran, S. and Case, S. (2014). *The Intervention Brigade: Legal Issues for the UN in the DRC*. International Peace Institute.
- The Associated Press. (2000). *The Forces of Rwanda and Uganda Fight in Congo*. The New York Times, 11 June 2000. Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2000/06/11/world/the-forces-of-rwanda-and-uganda-fight-in-congo.html#:~:text=Rwandan%20and%20Ugandan%20soldiers%20battled%20for%20the%20sixth,civil%20war%2C%20which%20broke%20out%2022%20months%20ago> (visited 5 April 2024).
- The Conversation. (2016). *Burundi and Rwanda: a rivalry that lies at the heart of Great Lakes crises*. 15 August. Available at: <http://theconversation.com/burundi-and-rwanda-a-rivalry-that-lies-at-the-heart-of-great-lakes-crises-63795> (visited 5 April 2024).
- The Conversation. (2022). *Rwanda has reopened the border with Uganda but distrust could close it again*. 10 March. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/rwanda-has-reopened-the-border-with-uganda-but-distrust-could-close-it-again-176861#:~:text=R->

[wanda%20has%20now%20fully%20reopened%20the%20Gatuna%20border,Uganda%2C%20Rwanda%2C%20Burundi%20and%20Democratic%20Republic%20of%20Congo](#) (visited 5 April 2024).

The Star. (2022). *Uhuru to formally close Nairobi process of DRC peace talks*. 5 December. Available at: <https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2022-12-05-uhuru-to-formally-close-nairobi-process-of-drc-peace-talks> (visited 5 February 2024).

United Nations. (1999). *Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement*, 10 July 1999. Available at: <https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/default/files/document/files/2024/05/cd990710lusakaagreement.pdf> (visited 2 April 2024).

United Nations. (2009). *Peace Agreement between the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the CNDP*, 23 March 2009. Available at: <https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/default/files/document/files/2024/05/cd090323peace20agreement20between20the20government20and20the20cndp.pdf> (visited on 7 October 2024).

United Nations. (2022). *Report of the Secretary General on Implementation of the Peace Security and Cooperation Framework for the DRC and the region*. UN Security Council document S/2022/735.

United Nations. (2023). *'Fragile ceasefire' holds in eastern DR Congo, Security Council hears*. UN News, 19 April. Available at: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/04/1135807#:~:text=After%20months%20of%20fighting%20and%20rising%20tensions%20across%20the%20Eastern> (visited 5 October 2024).

United Nations Security Council. (2007). *Resolution 1744 (2007) adopted by the Security Council at its 5633<sup>rd</sup> meeting*, S/RES/1744 (2007). UN Security Council, 20 February. Available at: <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n07/245/31/pdf/n0724531.pdf> (visited 7 October 2024).

United Nations Security Council. (2010). *Resolution 1925 (2010) adopted by the Security Council at its 6324<sup>th</sup> meeting*, S/RES/1925 (2010). UN Security Council, 28 May.

Van de Walle, N. (2022). *East Africa's DR Congo Force: The Case for Caution*. International Crisis Group, 25 August. Available at: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/great-lakes/democratic-republic-congo/east-africas-dr-congo-force-case-caution> (visited 28 December 2023).

Wambui, M. (2022). *We've made progress, Uhuru says as Nairobi meeting on DRC ends*. The East African, 6 December. Available at: <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/news/east-africa/armed-groups-pledge-to-stop-drc-war-4045426> (visited 7 October 2024).

Williams, P.D. (2009). *Into the Mogadishu Maelstrom: The African Union Mission in Somalia*. International Peacekeeping 16(4), 514–30.

World Bank Group. (2022a). *South Sudan Economic Monitor: Towards a Jobs Agenda (5<sup>th</sup> Edition)*. February. Available at: <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099650002152233681/pdf/P1737580e2efa4025093600b8be2b53aa10.pdf> (visited 10 April 2024).

World Bank Group. (2022b). *Aiming High: Securing Education to Sustain the Recovery*. Kenya Economic Update, Edition No. 25, June. Available at: <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099430006062288934/pdf/P17496106873620ce0a9f1073727d-1c7d56.pdf> (visited 10 April 2024).

Xinhua. (2022). *South Sudan approves US\$6.69 million for deployment of troops in DRC*. News Ghana, 29 August. Available at: <https://newsghana.com.gh/south-sudan-approves-us6-69-million-for-deployment-of-troops-in-drc/> (visited 10 April 2024).

Zounmenou, D. (2021). *Anti-MONUSCO protests send a clear message to Tshisekedi*. Institute for Security Studies (ISS), 5 May. Available at: <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/anti-monusco-protests-send-a-clear-message-to-tshisekedi> (visited 10 April 2024).

## Chapter Two

# A Critical Analysis of the Nexus Between Environmental Diplomacy and Climate Action in the COMESA Region

Japheth Kasimbu and Shazia Chaudhry

### Abstract

Environmental diplomacy promotes dialogue and multilateral cooperation among state and non-state actors to address transnational environmental challenges. It acknowledges multilateralism as a cornerstone of global peace, security and development. Climate change is one of the major challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, with extensive and far-reaching impacts that are particularly acute in Africa, where climate-related disasters increasingly exacerbate insecurity and conflict. Eastern and Southern Africa face rising vulnerabilities, temperature variations, erratic rainfall, droughts, cyclones, and flash floods, further compounded by limited financial and technological resources. Within this context, the COMESA a regional diplomatic bloc of 21 African states historical united by political, economic, and social bonds, has extended its cooperations beyond trade to address climate change through initiatives such as the COMESA Climate Change Initiative (2009-2013) and COMESA Climate Change Strategy (2020-2030). However, multiple challenges continue to hinder the realisation of its climate action goals. Against this background, this chapter provides a critical examination of the relationship between environmental diplomacy and climate action in the COMESA region, drawing exclusively on secondary data.

**Keywords:** ClimateAction, COMESA, Environmental Diplomacy, Multilateralism, Regional Integration

### Introduction

Environmental diplomacy has emerged as a crucial tool in the global fight against pressing environmental issues, particularly climate change. It provides a platform for fostering international, regional, and sub-regional cooperation to address environmental challenges through collective action (Knaepen and Dekeyser, 2023). Climate change, predominantly driven by human activities such as fossil fuel consumption, deforestation, and industrial processes, has far-reaching impacts on ecosystems, economies, and societies (IPCC, 2021). As the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has repeatedly highlighted, there is an urgent need to implement robust mitigation and adaptation strategies to combat global warming and safeguard both the environment and human livelihoods.

This chapter investigates the critical intersection of environmental diplomacy and climate action within the region, aiming to respond to the escalating environmental threats and examine how diplomatic efforts can strengthen regional climate policies and cooperation.

The key research question guiding this inquiry is: *How can environmental diplomacy contribute to advancing climate action and sustainability in the COMESA region?* In particular, the chapter engages debates on the role of diplomacy in securing commitments to the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 13 on climate action. It explores whether these diplomatic engagements are sufficient in driving the necessary policies and strategies needed to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions, transition to renewable energy sources, and enhance resilience against climate-induced disruptions.

The analysis is situated within the broader discourse on the nexus between environmental diplomacy and climate action, emphasising the need for integrated approaches that combine diplomatic negotiations with on-the-ground climate measures. Framed against the persistent rise in global temperature, approximately 1.1 degrees Celsius over the past century (IPCC, 2021), the study underscores that without effective diplomatic frameworks fostering cooperative mitigation, global warming is projected to exceed 1.5 degrees Celsius by 2030, leading to severe ecological and socio-economic consequences.

Methodologically, this chapter adopts a mixed-method approach, integrating qualitative analysis of policy frameworks and treaties with quantitative assessments of emission trends, regional climate data, and the effectiveness of implemented mitigation measures. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of how environmental diplomacy can be leveraged to drive substantive climate action in the COMESA region.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Green Theory**

Green theory, also known as environmental political theory, emerged in the late 20th century as a response to the growing global environmental crises and the perceived inadequacies of traditional political theories to address ecological concerns. It emphasises the importance of integrating environmental considerations into political, social, and economic frameworks. The main proponents of Green theory include Andrew Dobson and Robyn Eckersley, who are widely recognised for their contributions to the field of environmental politics.

At its core, Green theory seeks to understand the relationship between humans and nature. It aims to balance human needs for natural resources with the proper management of the environment. The theory proposes restructuring this relationship in order to build a sustainable environment for future generations (Eghweree and Imuetinyan, 2019).

Green theory gained traction after World War II, when industrialisation boosted economic growth but also drove pollution. It advocates for behaviours that mitigate environmental issues and emphasises coordination between humans and nature as a means to tackle global challenges such as climate change. Its main focus is the development and adoption of a problem-solving approaches to address a broad spectrum of environmental and climate change-related issues.

However, Green theory has been criticised for its narrow focus on environmental issues at the expense of broader social and economic factors. In particular, critics argue that it often overlooks the challenges faced by developing nations, including poverty, inequality, and

underdevelopment, and risks imposing stringent environmental standards that may not align with economic realities (Eckersley, 2004; Dryzek, 2013).

## **Environmental Theory**

Another theoretical lens relevant to this analysis is the environmental security theory, which links environmental degradation and resource scarcity to conflict and instability. It suggests that ecological challenges have significant implications for both national and global security. Key proponents include Michael T. Klare, who highlights resource competition as a cause of conflict, and Ashok Swain, who explores transboundary water management as both a source of cooperation and tension (Klare, 2001; Swain, 2008).

This theory underscores the interconnection between the environment and human security. It views natural resources as fundamental life-support systems, shaping social, political, and environmental conditions of a country or a region (Eghweree and Imuetinyan, 2019). It further posits that a healthy relationship between humans and the environment enables developmental gains through conservation, restoration and compliance. In essence, environmental security theory focuses on building reciprocal relationships between humans, the environment, and the developmental goals at individual, societal, national and global levels.

Nonetheless, critics argue that the theory often overstates the direct link between environmental degradation and conflict, overlooking the complex socio-political and economic drivers of instability. Scholars such as Deudney warn that framing environmental problems in security terms risks militarising environmental policy and encouraging coercive rather than cooperative solutions. Others caution that its state-centric approach can marginalise local and indigenous perspectives (Deudney, 1990; Dalby, 2002).

## **Climate Change in the COMESA**

The COMESA region is grappling with significant alterations in temperature and precipitation patterns, which pose substantial challenges to environmental sustainability and climate action. Projections indicate that average temperatures could rise by 1.5 to 3.5 degrees Celsius by 2050, with some areas facing increases of over 4 degrees Celsius under high-emission scenarios (World Bank, 2021). These changes have been linked to a rise in the frequency and severity of droughts, with severe occurrences increasing by 40 per cent since the 1980s. The implications of these climatic shifts highlight the need for robust institutional frameworks that promote cooperation among COMESA member states. Strengthened norms, such as joint drought response mechanisms and regional climate adaptation strategies, can support knowledge sharing and resource allocation to effectively combat these challenges (Mastrorillo et al., 2016).

Agriculture remains the backbone of many economies in the COMESA region, contributing significantly to food security, employment, and overall economic growth. In several member states, agriculture accounts for a substantial share of gross domestic product (GDP) and is vital for the livelihoods of millions of smallholder farmers. However, the adverse effects of climate change significantly threaten agricultural productivity, presenting challenges that

require urgent and comprehensive responses. Research indicates that agricultural yields could decline by as much as 50 per cent by 2030 due to changing climatic conditions, with staple crops like maize being particularly vulnerable (FAO, 2022).

The region's reliance on rain-fed agriculture makes it especially susceptible to erratic rainfall patterns, resulting in unpredictable growing seasons and higher crop failure rates. This vulnerability is exacerbated by limited access to modern agricultural technologies, inadequate irrigation infrastructure, and scarce financial resources for smallholder farmers. The consequences are dire: approximately 25 million additional people in eastern and southern Africa could face hunger by 2030 due to climate-induced agricultural decline (Zhou et al., 2019).

The COMESA region is also endowed with a rich mosaic of biodiversity that sustains ecological balance and supports millions of livelihoods. However, this biodiversity, is under significant threat from climate change and human activities that degrade ecosystems. The delicate interplay between diverse species and habitats is being disrupted, with an estimated 40 per cent of the region's species at risk of extinction due to habitat loss, pollution, and climate change (CBD, 2021).

Habitat destruction, often driven by agricultural expansion, urbanisation, and deforestation, is one primary drivers of biodiversity loss. Growing populations and expanding economies increase the demand for land and natural resources, leading to deforestation and ecosystem fragmentation. This not only threatens countless species but also disrupts ecological functions critical to human survival. For example, pollinators such as bees and butterflies are essential for the reproduction of many plants, including key food crops. Their decline has cascading effects on food security and agricultural productivity. Pollution further compounds the threats to biodiversity across the region (CBD, 2021).

Coastal regions within COMESA face additional challenges from rising sea levels. Current projections indicate that sea levels could rise by as much as one metre by 2100, significantly affecting low-lying areas such as those in Somalia and Madagascar (IPCC, 2021). This rise poses substantial risks not only to the natural environment but also to the livelihoods and economic stability coastal communities.

One of the most immediate impacts of rising sea levels is the increased risk of flooding. Encroaching waters threaten homes, infrastructure, and agricultural land, displacing communities and disrupting local economies. Urban centres along the coast may face costly infrastructure damage, while rural areas dependent on agriculture and fishing risk losing crops and fisheries, exacerbating food insecurity and economic vulnerability.

Saltwater intrusion is another pressing concern. As seawater infiltrates freshwater aquifers, it compromises the quality and availability of freshwater needed for drinking, sanitation, and irrigation. This has far-reaching effects on human health and agriculture, as salt-sensitive crops struggle to grow, leading to reduced yields and financial losses for farmers. In regions already challenged by climate variability, the combined impact of salinity and changing rainfall patterns further undermines food systems and livelihoods, heightening risks of hunger and poverty (UNEP, 2022).

## The COMESA Environmental Regime and Climate Action

COMESA has developed an environmental regime that emphasises sustainable development, biodiversity conservation, and climate change mitigation. This regime aligns with broader initiatives of the African Union (AU) and the United Nations (UN) to promote climate action across the continent. COMESA's environmental policies advocate integrated approaches that recognise the interdependencies between environmental sustainability and economic development, acknowledging that climate change poses significant threats to regional stability and growth. The organisation fosters collaboration among member states to implement climate action norms, such as the Paris Agreement, ensuring that environmental diplomacy remains central to regional planning and decision-making processes (COMESA, 2019; African Union, 2020).

Within this framework, the nexus between environmental diplomacy and climate action is increasingly recognised as essential for achieving the SDGs in the COMESA region. Both the AU's Agenda 2063 and the UN's 2030 Agenda highlight the necessity of collaborative efforts to address climate challenges while strengthening environmental resilience. COMESA actively engages in capacity building, knowledge sharing, and the development of frameworks that support adaptation and mitigation strategies among member states. By promoting synergy between environmental diplomacy, climate action, and development goals, COMESA seeks to foster a sustainable future that benefits both its member states and the environment (United Nations Environment Programme, 2021; COMESA, 2020).

Among regional and sub-regional blocs, COMESA has been particularly proactive in formulated robust policy frameworks and strategies to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change. The COMESA Treaty explicitly recognises environmental sustainability as a fundamental component of economic development and integration. This foundational commitment has led to the creation of various norms and institutions that synchronise environmental diplomacy with climate action. Noteworthy among these initiatives are policies promoting renewable energy sources, sustainable land use and agriculture, fostering energy efficiency, and advancing climate-smart transportation. By prioritising these strategies, COMESA aims to pave the way for a greener, climate-resilient future for its member states (COMESA, 2009; COMESA, 2020).

The COMESA Climate Change Action Strategy, adopted in 2009, provides a major framework for addressing the negative impacts of climate change in the regions. It focuses on adaptation, implementation, and mitigation as pathways to sustainable socioeconomic development. The strategy guides member states in aligning their national climate change policies with global commitments, such as the SDGs, particularly SDG 13 on climate action. By fostering collaboration and coordination among, the strategy reinforces the link between environmental diplomacy and climate action, while also facilitating knowledge sharing, capacity building, and resource mobilisation (United Nations Environment Programme, 2021; COMESA, 2020).

The integration of climate action into broader policy frameworks represents an important step forward for the region, illustrating the synchronisation of COMESA's environmental regime with climate objectives. Two major initiatives have been especially influential: the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and the New

Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Established in 2003, CAADP promotes climate-resilient agricultural practices and sustainable land management, recognising the strong link between climate change and food security (CAADP, 2003). NEPAD, launched in 2001, complements this effort by advocating climate-resilient infrastructure and the widespread adoption of renewable energy. Together, CAADP and NEPAD represent a dual approach that underscores COMESA's commitment to addressing climate challenges while promoting sustainable development (NEPAD, 2001).

The COMESA Treaty also works in tandem with broader regional initiatives, including the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) and the African Group of Negotiators on Climate Change (AGNCC), both of which provide platforms for Africa's climate interests. The Treaty provides a significant framework within which member states can collaborate on various environmental issues, including climate change. This collaborative effort aims to enhance the collective capacity of member states to address climate challenges and promote sustainable practices.

COMESA, in conjunction with AMCEN and AGNCC, works towards the common goal of advocating for policies that bolster climate resilience and foster sustainable environmental practices. These mechanisms enhance collective action by enabling member states to collaborate on pressing environmental issues. Through this unified approach, COMESA, AMCEN, and AGNCC advocate policies that strengthen climate resilience and sustainable environmental practices, pooling resources and expertise to address the complex challenges facing the region (AMCEN, 1985; AGNCC, n.d.).

Despite the presence of robust frameworks, however, implementation remains constrained by persistent challenges. These include limited financial resources, capacity shortfalls, and insufficient regional coordination. Financial constraints, in particular, impede the ability of states to implement climate policies comprehensively. Additionally, there is a need to strengthen technical and institutional capacity at both national and regional levels to effectively plan, monitor and evaluate climate initiatives. Strengthened regional coordination is equally vital to harmonise efforts and resources, ensuring a unified and impactful approach across the bloc.

Although there are examples of successful climate resilience projects facilitated COMESA's collaborative platforms, these challenges highlight the need for more concerted efforts and support. Only by overcoming such barriers can the environmental regime and climate action be fully synchronised for the benefit of all member states (UNECA, 2020).

## **Multilateralism in the Context of Environmental Diplomacy and Regional Climate Action**

The nexus between environmental diplomacy and climate action in the COMESA region is fundamentally rooted in the principles of multilateralism, which facilitates collaboration among member states to address shared challenges such as climate change. By definition, multilateralism involves organising relations between three or more states through associations or institutions, thereby promoting collective decision-making and negotiations aimed at achieving common goals. Within the COMESA framework, this approach

encourages member countries to engage in dialogue and cooperation to formulate equitable climate action strategies. Through active participation in these discussions, each country can contribute to shaping policies that address environmental concerns while considering the diverse interests and capabilities of all states involved. Such inclusivity strengthens the collective response to climate change and underscores the shared responsibility of addressing these pressing issues (Ruggie, 1992).

COMESA also exemplifies effective multilateralism by distributing responsibilities according to each member state's unique circumstances and capabilities, fostering a sense of collective ownership and accountability in climate action efforts. The strategic allocation of responsibilities ensures that no single country bears an undue burden, enhancing the feasibility of achieving common climate objectives. Furthermore, member states are encouraged to pool financial and technical resources to support joint projects aimed at sustainable solutions. Such collaboration enables larger-scale initiatives that might be unattainable for individual nations, ultimately accelerating regional progress toward climate resilience (Acharya, 2018; Jokela, 2011).

However, while multilateral approaches in the COMESA context promote inclusive and cooperative climate action, challenges remain. These include potential decision-making delays due to the need for consensus and the risk of more powerful states overshadowing the priorities of smaller ones (Hoffman, 2003).

## **Environmental Diplomacy and Climate Action**

Regional diplomatic collaboration is at the core of COMESA's climate action framework, providing a vital mechanism for addressing the diverse challenges posed by climate change. By engaging multiple stakeholders, including international organisations such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), national governments, and non-governmental organisations, COMESA leverages a vast pool of resources, technical knowledge, and best practices.

This integrative approach strengthens the region's ability to design and implement climate policies that are both adaptable and robust. It also facilitates the alignment of national climate agendas with regional and international objectives, promoting policy coherence across member states.

Through these partnerships, COMESA is able to mobilise funding, improve technological transfer, and bolster research, all of which are crucial for building climate resilience. The collaborative nature of its efforts ensures that climate policies are inclusive, addressing the unique vulnerabilities of each member state while contributing to a unified regional response to global climate challenges (Magu, 2023; COMESA Secretariat, 2019).

Environmental diplomacy involves international negotiations and interactions among nations and other stakeholders to address environmental challenges. It seeks cooperative solutions that balance sustainability with economic and social well-being. Its primary goals are to foster collaboration, manage conflicts, and develop agreements that promote environmental protection and sustainable development at a global level (Harris, 2000). In this regard, Susskind and Ali (2015) describe environmental diplomacy as a strategic

and collaborative negotiation process among nations and stakeholders to manage transboundary environmental challenges. This process emphasises dialogue, mediation, and agreements that support sustainable environmental management and conservation globally (Susskind and Ali, 2015).

Climate diplomacy, a subset of environmental diplomacy, focuses specifically on bringing all countries together to agree on action plans for effectively addressing climate change. Its inclusive nature allows diverse perspectives to be understood and incorporated into shared solutions. By encouraging collaboration and knowledge sharing, as well as the transfer of technologies and resources, climate diplomacy enables significant and rapid progress in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate impacts (Jallow and Craft, 2014). Such dialogue builds trust among nations, a foundation that is vital for securing future agreements and commitments necessary for sustained climate action (Lanchbery and Radanne, 2016).

In the COMESA region, diplomatic cooperation is crucial for showcasing innovative approaches and technologies to address climate change. By sharing successful strategies, member states can inspire one another to adopt similar approaches, accelerating the transition to a low-carbon economy. Participation in international forums further reinforces accountability, as countries monitor each other's climate commitments and strengthen the collective understanding that climate change is a shared challenge requiring joint solutions (Mabey et al., 2013).

Nonetheless, challenges persist in climate diplomacy, as not all countries are equally affected by climate change, leading to differences in urgency and prioritisation. Negotiating agreements that accommodate diverse economic capacities and historical emissions levels often proves challenging (Susskind and Ali, 2015). Furthermore, the absence of strong enforcement mechanisms can weaken the effectiveness of international agreements. Added to this is the persistent tension between short-term economic interests and long-term sustainability goals, which complicates efforts to secure impactful climate action (Elliott, 2013).

### **Climate Change: Major Impacts in the COMESA Region**

The COMESA region has been significantly impacted by rising temperatures, a trend that reflects global patterns of climate change. Average temperatures have increased by approximately 1.5 degrees Celsius since pre-industrial times (IPCC, 2019). This warming has resulted in more frequent and intense heat waves, exacerbating environmental challenges, particularly in agriculture, which is highly sensitive to temperature fluctuations.

The nexus between environmental diplomacy and climate action in the COMESA region is therefore becoming increasingly relevant, as these rising temperatures undermine agricultural productivity and contribute to food insecurity. Regional cooperation under the umbrella of environmental diplomacy is essential for addressing these challenges through the joint implementation of climate action plans, resource-sharing initiatives, and enhanced resilience across borders (Smith et al., 2020).

In addition to rising temperatures, extreme weather events such as cyclones and prolonged droughts have become more common, further complicating the region's ability to adapt

to climate impacts. For example, Madagascar and Mozambique have experienced increasingly intense cyclones, resulting in flooding, the destruction of infrastructure, and the displacement of communities. At the same time, countries such as Zambia and Zimbabwe have faced persistent droughts that severely affect rain-fed agriculture.

In this context, environmental diplomacy within the COMESA region is vital for coordinating collective responses. Through collaborative frameworks, member states can pursue cross-border initiatives, such as early warning systems for cyclones and joint drought mitigation measures, that strengthen regional resilience and promote sustainable development (Smith et al., 2020).

The increasing frequency of climate-induced events also underscores the importance of linking environmental diplomacy with climate action to safeguard vital resources like water. Prolonged droughts and erratic rainfall patterns are placing immense pressure on water resources, disrupting agricultural production and limiting access to safe drinking water.

In response, COMESA countries must continue leveraging environmental diplomacy as a tool to negotiate transboundary water agreements, promote sustainable water management practices, and share technological innovations to mitigate these risks. This intersection between diplomacy and climate action is critical to addressing the region's environmental and socioeconomic vulnerabilities, ensuring that the adverse effects of climate change are mitigated through coordinated regional strategies and policies (Smith et al., 2020).

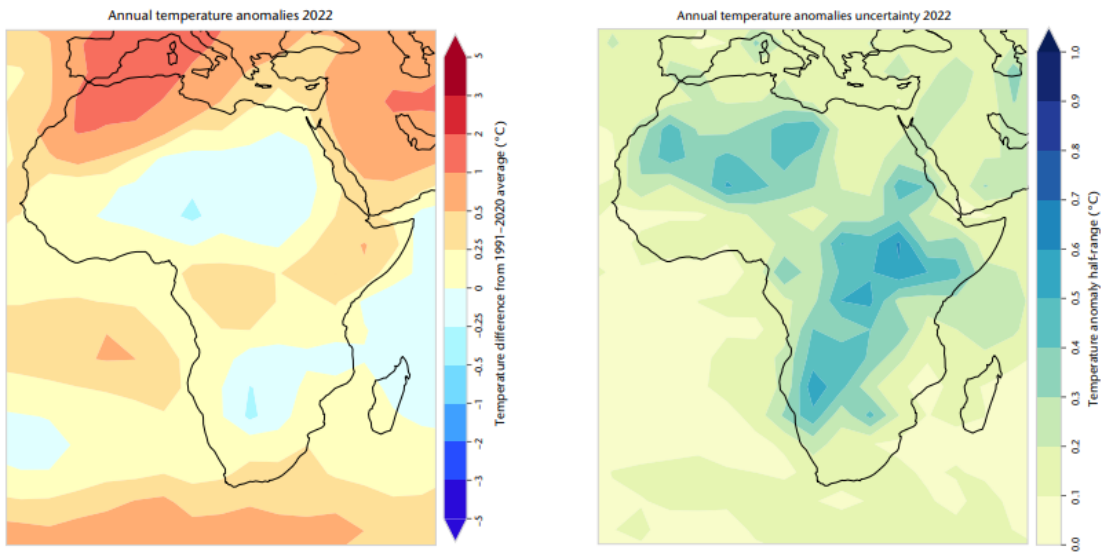
### **Changes in Temperature, Precipitation Patterns, and Drought**

According to the IPCC, Africa is a climate change hotspot, experiencing some of the most severe and far-reaching impacts globally. Simultaneously, African states often have limited financial and technological capacity to respond effectively. Within this context, the COMESA region (encompassing eastern and southern Africa) has recorded a noticeable temperature rise in temperature and shifts in precipitation patterns.

The region is also experiencing increases in mean wind speed and more frequent tropical cyclones associated with sea storms (IPCC, 2022). According to a 2020 World Bank report, the annual rainfall in the regions has declined by approximately 10 per cent over the past two decades (Jones et al., 2018).

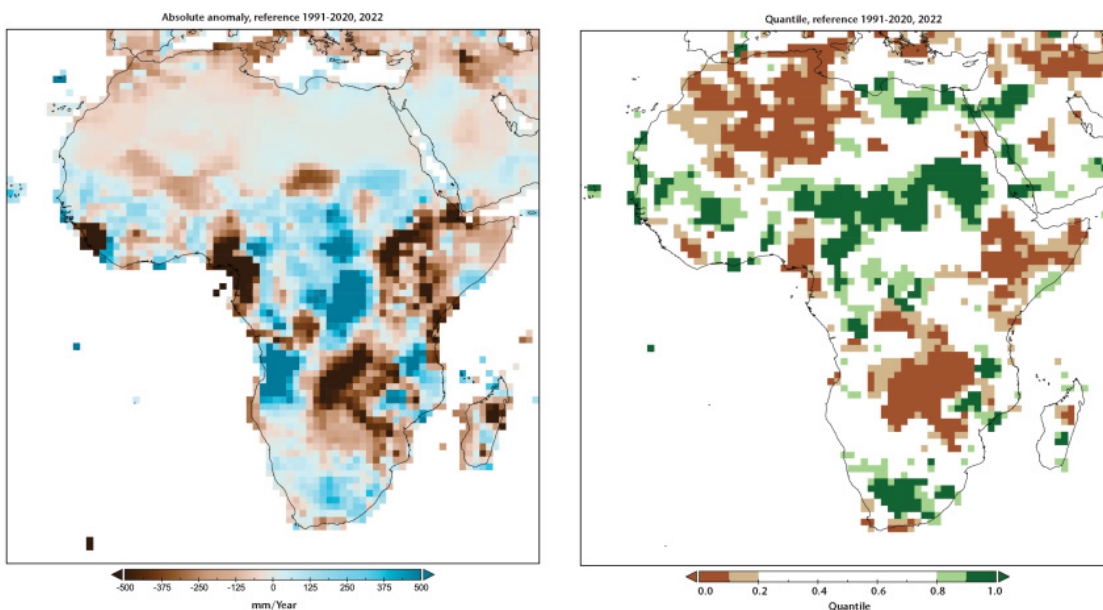
These changes have triggered a series of adverse impacts, exacerbating existing challenges in the region. The reduction in rainfall has led to prolonged and recurring droughts, destabilizing the fragile balance of water availability. Water scarcity, intensified by these extended dry periods, has had far-reaching effects on agriculture, industry and the daily life of citizens. Agriculture, a cornerstone of the COMESA region's economy, has been notably affected.

With less rainfall, water for crops is increasingly scarce, making it difficult for farmers to sustain production. As a result, crop yields have declined, and food production hindered, intensifying the issues of food security and heightened risks to nutrition and public health (Jones et al., 2018).



**Figure 1:** Near-surface air temperature anomalies for 2022 relative to the 1991–2020 average (left) and estimated uncertainty in temperature anomalies for 2022 (right).

Source: World Metrological Organization (WMO)(<https://library.wmo.int/idurl/4/67761>)



**Figure 2:** Precipitation variances in mm for 2022 (left).

Source: World Metrological Organization (WMO) (<https://library.wmo.int/idurl/4/67761>)

Blue areas- above-average precipitation.

Brown areas- below-average precipitation. Precipitation quantiles for 2022 (right).

Green - unusually high precipitation totals (light green indicates the highest 20 per cent, and dark green indicates the highest 10 per cent of the observed totals).

Brown areas- abnormally low precipitation totals (light brown indicates the lowest 20 per cent, and dark brown indicates the lowest 10 per cent of the observed totals).

The data reference is between 1991–2020.

Moreover, suppressed precipitation patterns have significantly affected communities, particularly in rural areas where access to clean and sufficient water is already precarious. Securing adequate water for households, sanitation, and daily needs has become an ongoing struggle, undermining quality of life and public well-being. As scarcity intensifies, competition over resources is likely to increase, raising the potential for conflicts and further straining social cohesion (Jones et al., 2018).

The discernible shifts in precipitation and the subsequent decline in rainfall therefore presents a complex set of challenges. Their cumulative impacts on agriculture, food security, and water availability underscore the urgent need for strategic and coordinated measures to manage and adapt to this evolving climate reality in the COMESA region.

## **The Gaps and Challenges in Policy**

The COMESA region faces significant gaps and challenges in its policy frameworks that hinder effective environmental diplomacy and climate action. One of the most notable issues is the lack of harmonisation between national policies and the regional strategies outlined in the COMESA Climate Change Policy Framework (CCPF). While the CCPF provides a comprehensive roadmap for climate action, its implementation at the national level often falls short due to varying priorities, governance structures, and institutional capacities across member states. For instance, some countries prioritise economic growth over environmental considerations, creating conflicts between development objectives and climate resilience efforts. This fragmented approach weakens the regional response to climate change, limiting the overall effectiveness of environmental diplomacy in achieving coherent climate action across. Strengthening alignment between national policies and regional frameworks is therefore crucial for fostering a more integrated approach (UNECA, 2020).

Capacity constraints and resource limitations further compound these challenges faced. Many COMESA member states lack the technical expertise, institutional frameworks, and financial resources necessary to develop and execute comprehensive climate policies (Mastrorillo et al., 2016). Although international financing mechanisms such as the Green Climate Fund exist, access remains a challenge due to stringent eligibility criteria and bureaucratic hurdles. Insufficient training and capacity-building initiatives also restrict the ability of policymakers and practitioners to effectively engage in environmental diplomacy and climate action planning (Gonzalez et al., 2018).

Another area of concern is the weakness of stakeholder engagement climate governance. Effective environmental diplomacy and climate action require the participation of a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society, local communities, and the private sector. However, in the COMESA region, engagement is often narrow, with marginalised voices and local communities frequently excluded from decision-making processes. This lack of inclusivity undermines the legitimacy and effectiveness of climate policies, as they may fail to address the priorities of those most affected. Moreover, weak mechanisms for stakeholder participation can fuel resistance or non-compliance, further complicating implementation efforts (Zhou et al., 2019).

Finally, limited coordination and collaboration among regional bodies and member states pose additionally obstacles. Organisations such as COMESA, AMCEN, and AGNCC play

vital roles in climate governance, yet their efforts are often constrained by overlapping mandates, insufficient resources, and weak communication channels. This institutional fragmentation leads to duplication and inefficient resource use, the impact of climate initiatives. Competing national priorities can also undermine collective action, as member states may pursue domestic agendas at the expense of regional cooperation (AMCEN, 1985; AGNCC, n.d.).

## Conclusion

The nexus between environmental diplomacy and climate action in the COMESA region represents a critical intersection where regional cooperation and climate resilience efforts must converge to address the significant challenges of climate change. The CCPF provides a pivotal mechanism for facilitating collaborative among member states, integrating climate considerations into key sectors such as agriculture, energy, and infrastructure.

However, despite the establishment of this framework and its alignment with global agreements like the Paris Agreement, the effectiveness of climate action remains constrained by inconsistencies between national policies and regional objectives. The lack of synchronisation in priorities and strategies across member states hinders the potential for collective action and highlights the urgent need for greater coordination and harmonisation of climate policies.

Capacity constraints and resource limitations further exacerbate these challenges. Many member states continue to face shortages of financial resources, technical expertise, and institutional capacity, hindering the development and execution of effective climate policies. Accessing international climate finance remains particularly difficult, with bureaucratic barriers and stringent eligibility criteria excluding some of the most vulnerable nations.

To bridge these gaps, there is an urgent need for targeted capacity-building efforts and increased investment in climate-resilient infrastructure and practices. Prioritising these measures will not only strengthen member states' ability to mitigate and adapt to climate change but also enhance their participation in environmental diplomacy at regional and international levels.

The success of climate action in the COMESA region is contingent upon fostering inclusive stakeholder engagement. Ensuring that local communities, civil society, and the private sector are fully involved in decision-making processes is essential for creating climate policies that are equitable and effective. Such engagement enhances the legitimacy of climate initiatives, promotes local ownership, and improves the prospects for successful implementation.

Finally, strengthening collaboration among regional bodies such as COMESA, AMCEN, and AGNCC will be vital in harmonising efforts and optimising resource allocation. By addressing these critical areas within policy alignment, capacity constraints, resource mobilisation, and inclusivity, the COMESA region can more effectively navigate the complex nexus between environmental diplomacy and climate action, paving the way for a resilient and sustainable future amid climate change.

## Recommendations

This analysis underscores the vital connection between environmental diplomacy and climate action within the COMESA region. It highlights how collaborative efforts and strategic policies are essential in addressing pressing climate challenges. As the region faces significant environmental threats, effective diplomacy becomes crucial for fostering regional cooperation and promoting sustainable practices. The following recommendations aim to enhance the integration of environmental diplomacy into climate strategies, ensuring a resilient and sustainable future for the COMESA member states.

1. Member states should work towards aligning national climate policies with the CCPPF. Establishing regular review mechanisms can ensure that national strategies reflect regional priorities and facilitate a unified response to climate challenges.
2. Implement targeted capacity-building programmes aimed at equipping government officials, civil society, and local communities with the skills and knowledge necessary to engage effectively in climate governance. This could include training on climate finance, project management, and sustainable agricultural practices.
3. Advocate for more flexible and accessible international climate financing mechanisms. COMESA member states should collaborate to streamline processes for accessing funds, such as those from the Green Climate Fund, and enhance their national capacities to prepare and submit funding proposals.
4. Create inclusive platforms for dialogue that involve a diverse range of stakeholders, including local communities, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), the private sector, and academic institutions. These platforms can facilitate knowledge sharing, enhance accountability, and ensure that climate policies address the needs of all affected groups.
5. Develop and fund regional projects aimed at enhancing climate resilience, such as sustainable water management systems and climate-smart agriculture initiatives. These projects should be designed to address the specific vulnerabilities of different member states while promoting regional cooperation.
6. Encourage member states to integrate climate action into their broader development agendas by aligning national policies with the SDGs. This integration can foster synergies between economic development and climate resilience.
7. Develop a robust climate monitoring and reporting system that tracks climate change impacts, adaptation measures, and progress toward climate targets across the COMESA region. This system should include data collection protocols and performance indicators to guide decision-making.
8. Foster collaboration among research institutions across the region to share best practices, innovative technologies, and scientific research related to climate change adaptation and mitigation. Establishing regional research networks can promote effective solutions tailored to local contexts.
9. Member states should review and strengthen existing environmental laws and regulations to ensure they effectively address climate change impacts. This

includes enacting legislation that supports renewable energy adoption, sustainable land use, and biodiversity conservation.

10. COMESA should actively engage in international climate negotiations and advocate for the region's interests. This includes promoting the unique challenges faced by its member states and pushing for more equitable climate action commitments from developed countries.
11. Develop incentives and support mechanisms to engage the private sector in climate action initiatives. This can include creating public-private partnerships (PPPs) that focus on sustainable development projects, renewable energy investments, and climate-resilient infrastructure.
12. Implement a system for regular assessments of the effectiveness of climate policies and initiatives within the COMESA region. These assessments should include stakeholder feedback and use the findings to inform future policy adjustments and strategies.

## References

- Acharya, A. (2018). Multilateralism and the Changing World Order, in Thomas G. Weiss and Sam Daws (eds), *The Oxford Handbook on the United Nations*, 2nd edn, Oxford Handbooks (2018; online edn, Oxford Academic. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198803164.013.43> (accessed 1 Oct. 2023).
- Adams, J. (2017). *Building Climate Resilience: Strategies for State and Non-State Actors*. *Climate Action Journal*, 5(2), 67-80.
- African Union. (2020). *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want*. African Union.
- COMESA. (2009). *COMESA Climate Change Initiative 2009-2013*. Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa.
- COMESA. (2019). *COMESA Regional Strategy on Climate Change*. Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa.
- COMESA. (2020). *COMESA Climate Change Strategy 2020-2030*. Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa.
- Deudney, D. (1990). *The Case Against Linking Environmental Degradation and National Security*. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 19(3), 461-476.
- Dryzek, J. S. (2013). *The Politics of the Earth: Environmental Discourses* (3rd ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Eghweree, C. O., and Imuetinyan, F. O. (2019). *Africa and the Climate Change Diplomacy*. *Journal of Sustainable Development*, 12(2), 101. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.5539/jsd.v12n2p101>.
- Elliot, L. (2013). Climate diplomacy. In: A.F. Cooper, J. Heine and R. Thakur, eds. *The Oxford handbook of modern diplomacy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Online). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199588862.013.0048> (visited on 30 Sept. 2023).

FAO. (2022). *The State of Food and Agriculture 2022*. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). (2019). *Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C*.

Jallow, B. P., and Craft, B. (2014). *Engaging Effectively in Climate Diplomacy: Policy Pointers from the Gambia*. International Institute for Environment and Development. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep01588>.

Jokela, J. (2011). Global Governance and Effective Multilateralism. *HE G-20: A Pathway to Effective Multilateralism?* European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), 2011, pp. 51–60. JSTOR. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep07003.7> (visited on 30 Sept. 2023).

Jones, K., and Brown, M. (2018). *Drought and Its Impact on Biodiversity in the COMESA Region*. *Environmental Science Journal*, 12(3), 145-158.

Knaepen, H. and Dekeyser, K. (2023). *EU climate adaptation diplomacy: searching for common ground with Africa*. ECDPM Discussion Paper 346. Maastricht: European Centre for Development policy Management (ECDPM). Available at: <https://ecdpm.org/application/files/4516/8597/2032/EU-climate-adaptation-diplomacy-searching-common-ground-Africa-ECDPM-Discussion-Paper-346-2023.pdf>.

Lanchbery, J. and Radanne, P. (2016). *Climate change diplomacy: The making of the Paris Agreement*. London: Routledge.

Mabey, N., Gallagher, L. and Born, C. (2013). The Evolution of Climate Diplomacy and the International Climate Regime. In *Understanding Climate Diplomacy: Building Diplomatic Capacity and Systems to Avoid Dangerous Climate Change* (pp. 21–34). E3G. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep17706.6>.

Magu, S. M. (2023). *Towards Pan-Africanism: Africa's Cooperation through Regional Economic Communities (RECs), Ubuntu and Communitarianism*. Springer Nature.

Mastrorillo, M., et al. (2016). *Drought Risk and Climate Change in Eastern Africa: A Review of the Literature*. *Environmental Research Letters*, 11(12), 123017.

Smith, L. (2020). *Strengthening Collaboration for Climate Resilience in the COMESA Region: A Guidebook*. COMESA Publications.

Susskind, L. and Ali, S. (2015). *Climate Change Diplomacy: The Role of Women in Environmental Management in Africa*. *International Journal of Environmental Studies*, 72(2), 232-246.

World Bank. (2021). *Climate Change in Africa: A World Bank Report*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.

World Meteorological Organization (WMO). (2023). *State of the Climate in Africa 2022*. Geneva: WMO. Available at: [https://library.wmo.int/viewer/67761/download?file=1330\\_State-of-the-Climate-in-Africa-2022\\_en.pdf&type=pdf&navigator=1](https://library.wmo.int/viewer/67761/download?file=1330_State-of-the-Climate-in-Africa-2022_en.pdf&type=pdf&navigator=1).

## Chapter Three

# Nation Branding as a Competitive Identity Tool for COMESA Member States: The Case of Kenya

Peter Misiani Mwencha and Thrity Engineer Mbuthia

### Abstract

The application of branding techniques to geographical locations is a relatively new phenomenon driven by the belief that, in an increasingly competitive global market for visitors, investments, and exports, countries, cities, as well as regions, can be viewed as products that can be branded so as to enhance their international standing and appeal. Owing to this realisation, nation branding has gained prominence across the globe as a differentiation tool. Numerous governments—including some in the COMESA region—are devoting considerable resources to nation branding in a bid to enhance their regional as well as global competitiveness by creating unique, market-oriented, and modern identities that differentiate them and their offerings from their neighbours and competitors. This qualitative study employs a narrative literature review to examine the role of nation branding as a tool for rejuvenating Kenya's identity as it seeks to compete for visitors, investments, and trading partners for its exports within the COMESA region and beyond. It analyses the country's approach to nation branding, highlighting the strategies deployed, its successes, as well as the shortcomings and future prospects. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of the geostrategic role and impact of effective nation branding by Kenya, a COMESA member state, on its international engagement, economic development, and global competitiveness. It also helps to articulate and underscore the rationale for African countries to construct modern, appealing and inclusive competitive identities. It therefore contributes to the critical discourse regarding the need to recast national identity in commercial terms, as opposed to the traditional political approach commonly practised by post-colonial African states.

**Keywords:** Nation Branding, Competitive Identity, Country Brand, Kenya, COMESA

### Introduction

The rapid advancement of globalisation requires that each nation, city, and region compete for various global factors, such as consumers, tourists, investors, students, entrepreneurs, international events, and recognition in the international arena (Anholt, 2007). Faced with this reality, nations worldwide have been forced to reflect on the roles they play in the international arena and to define identities that differentiate them from others by emphasising their unique characteristics and attributes. Such identities not

only shape national image but also contribute to its competitive advantage in the global market (Yaprakli et al., 2020: 170). As a result, many governments are now investing more and more resources to enhance their nation's image and formulating strategies that can help them gain a competitive advantage in the global market (Torsvik, 2011). This trend is evident in the growing importance of nation branding as a strategic tool to differentiate countries and gain a competitive advantage.

With nations across the globe competing to pull in investors, aid, tourists, business visitors, students, major events, researchers, travel writers, and talented entrepreneurs and pushing out products, services, policies, culture, and ideas (Anholt, 2013: 3), the idea and practice of nation branding have gained increased currency with multiple countries. These countries are employing branding consultants, establishing branding commissions and producing branding strategies, all designed to enhance the profile and image of their respective nation (Browning, 2016: 50; Kaneva, 2017: 117). Thus, nation branding constitutes a strategic instrument for the politics of geographical imaginations (Browning and Oliveira, 2017).

Nation branding extends beyond economic implications; it plays a pivotal role in shaping international perceptions and geopolitical trends (Jehangir, 2023). Consequently, nation branding has also become an important consideration in foreign policy articulation and diplomatic practice (Qobo, 2021:9).

Nation branding has far-reaching benefits for both developed and, more importantly, developing nations, whose images and reputations in the global marketplace have, for the most part, adversely affected their overall competitiveness in exports, tourism and, more significantly, investment attraction (Matiza and Oni, 2014). Even small nations, such as Estonia and Costa Rica, have leveraged nation branding to transform their global image, providing positive proof of the opportunities for nations to proactively change and build brand perceptions (City Nation Place, 2020). While wealthy industrialised countries such as the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom and France currently lead the world in creating and sustaining strong powerful country brands, developing countries increasingly recognise that an enhanced nation brand and image will create more favourable conditions for foreign direct investment (FDI), tourism, trade, and even for improved political relations (Mzembi, 2014).

In recent years, a growing number of African countries have also started employing nation branding as a competitive identity tool to differentiate themselves from other countries in the continent and beyond, promote their strengths, and ameliorate the negative aspects of the continent brand effect (Papadopoulos and Hamzaoui-Essoussi, 2015: 2). Kenya and Rwanda who are members of COMESA, have incorporated these insights into their nation branding strategies. Kenya's "*Make it Kenya*" campaign emphasising economic strengths and cultural diversity, and Rwanda's "*Visit Rwanda*" campaign, integrating tourism and business promotion, exemplify this trend. Other COMESA member states, such as Zimbabwe, that suffer from a negative image and identity but wish to raise their profiles in the global market could also benefit from nation branding (Sena, 2012:1).

While there is currently no COMESA regional brand, at the continental level, the 'Brand Africa' initiative, which was launched in 2010, aims to reshape perceptions of Africa from a continent plagued by crises and calamities to one of economic potential and

entrepreneurship. This public-private initiative seeks to empower Africans to reclaim their image using modern nation branding and image management tools (Browning and de Oliveira, 2016:1-2). Central to this effort is the annual Brand Africa 100 rankings. It mobilises diverse stakeholders across the continent to identify, celebrate, and promote Africa's most admired brands, showcasing African excellence and fostering continental pride, unity, and competitiveness (African Media Agency, 2025; Brand Africa, 2025).

Nation branding is not merely a cosmetic exercise; it is an essential component of nation-building that can foster economic growth, social cohesion, and political stability. Owing to this, nation branding has become a popular yet contested field of research and practice. It has captivated the interest of academics, practitioners, and policymakers across diverse disciplines, including business and marketing studies, economics, sociology, anthropology, communication studies, and, to a lesser extent, politics and international relations (Browning, 2016: 51).

However, the existing body of nation branding research covers a limited number of countries and regions (Hao et al., 2019:20). In particular, studies with a focus on branding of African countries are limited (Osei, Tjandra, Omar and Ensor, 2013; Matiza and Oni, 2014), more so with regards to countries in the COMESA region. This study, therefore, seeks to enhance the understanding of nation branding, with a specific focus on COMESA countries, which continue to suffer from negative images, stereotypes, and malign representations (Browning and de Oliveira, 2016: 3).

Accordingly, this study seeks to enhance the understanding of the role of nation branding as a competitive identity tool, with a specific focus on Kenya, a COMESA member state. It is structured as follows: Section one is the introduction. Section two reviews related literature. Section three describes the main traits of nation branding. Section four discusses the main benefits of nation branding. Section five analyses how Kenya has employed nation branding to enhance its competitive identity. Section six highlights the challenges facing Kenya's nation branding efforts. Section seven concludes and provides relevant recommendations.

This study aims to contribute to the body of knowledge on nation branding in COMESA and Africa in general by examining how nation branding has been employed as a competitive identity tool by countries in the region. More specifically, the study reviews existing literature to analyse Kenya's nation branding efforts, which have been geared towards rejuvenating the country's competitive identity as a means to attract visitors and investments while boosting its exports. By doing so, it aims to use Kenya as a unit of analysis to inform the process of constructing modern, appealing, and inclusive competitive identities by countries in the COMESA region, many of which suffer from negative images and stereotypes.

## **Literature Review and Conceptual Frameworks**

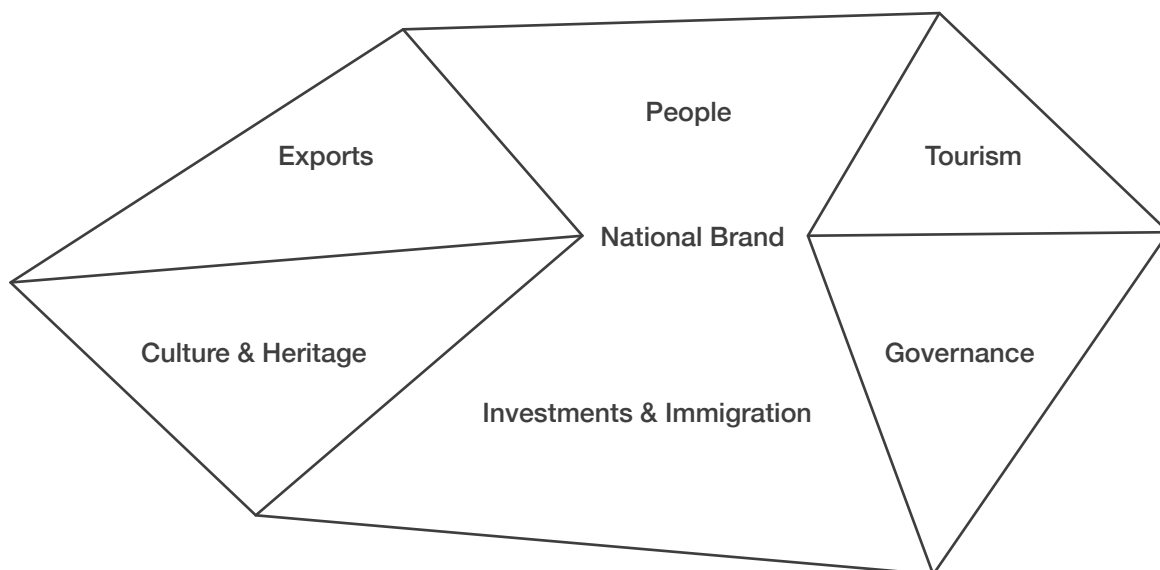
### **What is a Nation Brand?**

While there is no single definition of a nation brand, Fan (2006) defined a nation brand as the total sum of all perceptions of a nation in the mind of international stakeholders. It may contain: people, place, culture/language, history, food, fashion, famous faces (celebrities) and global brands, among others. This holistic perspective underscores the multifaceted

nature of a nation’s identity and the factors contributing to its global reputation. Similarly, Dinnie (2008:15) defined a nation brand as “the unique, multi-dimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all of its target audiences.” This perspective highlights the cultural grounding of a nation’s brand, emphasising the importance of authenticity and resonance with its intended audiences. As pointed out by Carah and Louw (2016: 41), nation brands are not only produced by advertising agencies and nation branding consultancies, but they are also mediated by cultural producers and citizens. In other words, the nation brand is a multi-layered process that requires the symbolic consent and collaboration of the public.

From an external perspective, a nation’s brand aligns with the ‘shared values of a global order,’ thereby defining the boundaries within which the nation imagines and projects itself (Aronczyk, 2008b). In this regard, Graan (2016:82) emphasises that nation brands should not be viewed as static entities but rather as evolving projects that require ongoing attention and strategic management to effectively position a country in the international arena. This perspective underscores the importance of proactive engagement and coordinated efforts by government bodies, public institutions, and other stakeholders to influence how a nation is perceived and positioned in the global context. Consequently, to cultivate a nation brand, countries must devise a coherent and meticulously planned strategy aimed at gradually enhancing the brand image over time. Moreover, the diverse stakeholder group involved calls for effective coordination and demands effective management.

A nation’s brand can be leveraged to support domestic and international goals, such as attracting FDI, gaining a favorable position in negotiations, strengthening diplomatic and trade relationships, and persuading other states to support specific goals (Boan, 2022:6). In this context, Anholt (2005; 2006) proposed a National Brand Hexagon Model, which suggests that a nation can utilise six dimensions—people, tourism, exports, governance, investment and immigration, as well as culture and heritage—to understand, measure and ultimately enhance its national image and reputation. Below is a conceptual model that illustrates the multifaceted nature of the nation-brand construct.



**Figure 1:** Anholt’s Nation Brand Model

Source: *Anholt (2005; 2006)*

The Anholt-Ipsos Nation Brands Index (NBI) calculates its ranking based on exports, governance, tourism, culture, people, and immigration. According to the 2023 NBI, Kenya is ranked 56th, reflecting a slight decline by one position (The Place Brand Observer, 2024). The slight decline in Kenya's ranking on the Anholt-Ipsos NBI, from 55th to 56th in 2023, can be associated with mixed performance across key areas such as exports, governance, tourism, culture, people, and immigration, which form the basis of the ranking (The Place Brand Observer, 2024).

Specifically, Kenya experienced a decrease in foreign direct investment inflows in 2023, dropping by USD 93 million, and a significant decline in FDI outflows by USD 914 million, indicating challenges in the investment climate (The Place Brand Observer, 2024). Although Kenya's trade competitiveness remains strong regionally, its global tourism ranking slipped to 88th, reflecting potential weaknesses in attracting visitors (The Place Brand Observer, 2024). Additionally, governance and institutional factors, as well as infrastructure and human capital constraints highlighted in the Global Innovation Index, may have contributed to the marginal drop in Kenya's nation brand strength and reputation (WIPO, 2024).

## Contextualising Nation Branding

Nation-branding is defined as “a holistic and synchronised approach to marketing the nation that unites a broader range of sectors and seeks to coordinate the often-diverse messages different agencies (for example, tourist boards, cultural institutes, foreign ministries, exporter organisations) put out” (Browning, 2015: 202) to present a unified narrative. These messages are directed at both foreign and domestic audiences.

With respect to foreign audiences, nation-branding functions as a soft power instrument aimed at encouraging investment, consumption, and trade, and improving international standing. For domestic audiences, nation branding initiatives aim to foster civic engagement by urging residents to internalise and personify national values by ‘living the brand’, encourage economic participation by citizens through entrepreneurship, and to foster social cohesion and collective self-worth (Aronczyk, 2013; Browning, 2015; Browning and Oliveira, 2017:5).

In this regard, it is not just “concerned with a country's image on the international stage, but also covering political, economic and cultural dimensions” (see Fan, 2010: 98). As Browning (2015; 196) argues, nation branding is not just about questions of image but also of identity, status, and recognition in a context where a lack of visibility is seen as inherently problematic. Accordingly, nation branding's focus is much broader. It can encompass anything from foreign and security policy to trade, tourism, and even the broader social, economic, educational, and welfare policies of a state (Browning, 2015: 201).

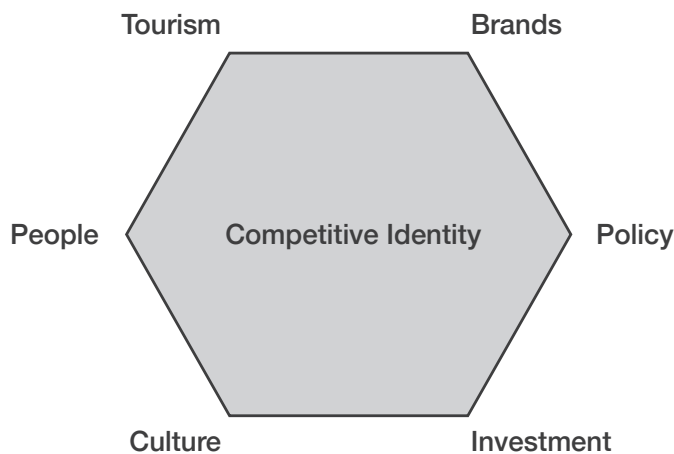
In practice, nation branding encompasses a range of discursive and institutional practices at the *economic*, *political* and *cultural* levels (Lee, 2021: 59). In this context, a broad distinction can be made between *technical-economic*, *political* and *cultural-critical* nation branding approaches (Kaneva, 2017). The most popular one, the technical-economic approach (e.g. Moilanen and Rainisto, 2009), is based on the perspective of branding practitioners and marketing scholars (See Dinnie, 2008, p.15; Anholt, 2007), whose main emphasis is on economic competition.

The political perspective (e.g. van Ham 2002, 2008), on the other hand, views nation branding as a coordinated government effort to manage a country’s image to promote tourism, investment, and foreign relations (Volcic and Andrejevic, 2011). From this perspective, nation branding is seen as both as a strategic political economy tool (Volcic and Andrejevic, 2011) and a practical tool for transnational governance that aids global decision-making (Van Ham, 2001). Lastly, the cultural-critical approach exemplified by Aronczyk (2008a) examines the implications of nation branding on national identities, social power relations and agenda-setting, as highlighted by Kaneva (2017). Nation-branding, therefore, links together corporate marketing strategies with governmental techniques of public diplomacy and propaganda (Dinnie, 2015).

### Understanding Competitive Identity

Competitive identity refers to the strategic fusion of a nation’s core identity and its global competitiveness (Benedetti et al., 2011), thereby creating a powerful synergy between its brand management, public diplomacy, and economic promotion initiatives and activities (Anholt, 2007). Competitive identity is crucial because a strong brand opens the doors to a variety of benefits for the country, including increased negotiating power, economic growth, and the ability to influence other nations through soft power attraction (Boan, 2022: 13). Building a competitive identity for a nation requires a broad participation from both the public and private sector: Government, ministries, public institutions with responsibilities in this field, media, business and university environment, representatives of the politic and cultural fields, NGOs (Pop and Macovei, 2007).

Anholt’s (2007) competitive identity hexagon outlines various communication channels that contribute to shaping a nation’s competitive identity. These channels typically include: export brands, governance, culture and heritage, tourism, people, immigration, and investment. These channels interact to form the overall perception of a nation, which in turn influences its competitive identity globally. According to Anholt (2007: 27), “every act of promotion, exchange or representation needs to be seen not as an end in itself but as an opportunity to build the country’s overall reputation; and all the bodies, agencies and organizations at each point of the hexagon have to work together, meet together, and align their behaviour to a common national strategy.”



**Figure 2:** The hexagon of competitive identity  
 Source: Adapted from Anholt, S. (2007: 26)

From a geopolitical perspective, competitive identity refers to the ways countries seek to improve their position in the global hierarchy by differentiating themselves from others and promoting their unique strengths (Browning and de Oliveira, 2017). As Anholt asserts, only nations capable of projecting a clear, credible and compelling identity—backed by a coherent strategy—can effectively compete in the global marketplace (Anholt, 2007: 22). Thanks to globalisation, countries that once competed over territory and power through wars and economic actions are now competing through cultural influence and public diplomacy (Boan, 2022: 6) for investment and market share and where success is viewed as conditional on a state's entrepreneurial capacities.

This shift reflects a broader transformation in international relations, where the “state as firm” analogy underscores a changed mindset: states are increasingly seen as corporate-like entities which must cultivate entrepreneurial agility by leveraging their unique cultural, economic, and political assets to attract investment, talent, and alliances, instead of engaging in military adventurism. In this emerging international order, military exploits are seen as outdated and counterproductive (Browning, 2015: 200). Instead, soft power tools such as cultural diplomacy, trade partnerships, and nation branding are now critical to securing geopolitical influence. Every destination might have an inherent (cultural characteristics, values, culture, landscape, architecture, gastronomy) or acquired competitive identity (or both). In comparison to the inherent aspect of destination competitive identity, the acquired aspect is more accessible to nations. What is important in developing a competitive identity is acquired aspects in which policies, strategies, plans, activities, and efforts come into play (Anholt, 2007; Zhou et al., 2013).

## **Key Traits of Nation Branding**

This section discusses three main characteristics of nation branding.

### **Nation Branding is an Indispensable Competitive Tool**

Within the contemporary international competitive environment, nations are constantly required to respond to dynamic social and economic frameworks, similar to a commercial marketplace. Concurrently, nations compete with each other for resources and alliances that can establish and enhance their competitive advantage. In this context, nation branding is considered an important market-driven mechanism for creating and leveraging the competitive advantages of nations and, consequently, for their sustainable development (Avlonitis, 2018).

Thus, branding strategies reflect a broader reconstitution of the nation-state around the idea of the “competition state” (Weidner 2011), where governments strategically position themselves to seize global economic opportunities (Anholt, 2003). In this competitive arena, a country's ability to devote greater financial resources to its promotional campaigns gives it an advantage over other nations.

However, as political economists have documented, there are significant disparities in national economic capacities, with wealthier countries dominating nation branding efforts due to superior financial resources. In contrast, others struggle to compete due to limited resources (Kaneva, 2016: 181-182).

## Nation Branding is a Long-Term Process

Developing and managing a nation brand requires a long-term perspective, which can often clash with short-term political agendas and limited government resources (Temporal, 2022). As a forward-looking approach to nation branding, this requires continuity and consistency in branding efforts despite changes in political leadership, prioritising the long-term interests of the country over short-term political gains. In addition, effective nation branding requires sustained investment in building and promoting a positive national identity that appeals to both domestic and international audiences.

However, developing nations often face compounded obstacles, including political instability, underdeveloped public institutions, and insufficient bureaucratic expertise—all critical for government-led branding initiatives. These systemic challenges are further exacerbated by severe resource limitations and a lack of specialised marketing capabilities (Papadopoulos and Hamzaoui-Essoussi, 2015: 4). Without stable governance structures and professional expertise, even well-conceived branding strategies struggle to achieve meaningful impact.

## Nation Branding is a Multi-Stakeholder Process

Nation branding is not solely the responsibility of the government. It involves collaboration among various stakeholders, including governmental bodies, private sector entities, civil society organisations, and citizens to effectively shape and communicate a country’s identity domestically and internationally (Melissen 2005: 19 - 21). Governmental agencies play a crucial role in setting strategic objectives and coordinating branding efforts, but they must work in concert with other stakeholders to achieve success. Private sector organisations contribute expertise in marketing, communications, and branding techniques, while civil society groups offer insights into social and cultural dynamics that shape national identity. Additionally, citizens play a vital role as ambassadors and advocates for their country, influencing perceptions through their actions and interactions with others.

**Table 1: A Summary of Nation Branding Characteristics**

No.	Feature	Context
1.	Goal	Promoting (mostly) economic interest
2.	Context	De-politicised, general agreement among actors and political parties (but in some cases it is politicised)
		Image driven
		Driven by marketing and consumerism
3.	Targeted at	Consumers (of images, products, places)
		Both foreign and domestic audiences. Without the consent of domestic audiences, it is doomed to fail
		Applicable to any countries, more universal
4.	Government Role	Government could be the initiator but rarely the sender (danger of propaganda) leading to less or no government control

No.	Feature	Context
5.	Actors	National tourist boards, travel agencies; investment promotion and export agencies; trade boards, chambers of commerce, multinational organisations, which are all multipliers
6.	Strategies	Image management
		Emphasis on visual and symbolic elements
		Centralised approach, driven by the brand essence (one-size-fits all) tailored towards a global and homogenous audience
		Focus exclusively on positive and 'marketable' elements of a country's culture and people
7.	Tactics	Logo and slogan; country advertisements in leading international TV channels, sponsored pages in leading international magazines; emarketing, web portals; press tours, brochures, pseudo-events
8.	Media*	Relies heavily on mass media as the main channel. Media are passive, usually carrying paid advertisements.
9.	Time Frame	Ad hoc, campaign-driven
10.	Budget	Public and private partnership
11.	Evaluation	Mostly long-term

\* Nation branding traditionally depended on mass media for broad messaging, but now increasingly leverages social media platforms like Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and Facebook to engage global audiences directly. Governments use these channels for real-time interaction, authentic storytelling, and cultural exchange, enhancing visibility and trust while tracking campaign impact efficiently.

Source: Adapted from Szondi (2008), p. 17-18.

## Benefits of Nation Branding

Nation branding has three key benefits for countries. These are discussed in the following section.

### Provides Commercial and Economic Advantages for Countries

In the current age of economic globalisation, the perceived identity of a nation is seen as a valuable asset for strategically marketing a specific region (Kotler and Gertner, 2002; Morgan, et al., 2011; Del Percio, 2016: 5). In this regard, nation branding is believed to create a competitive edge, often termed as a “profit of distinction,” whereby nations with positive and well-established brand images can leverage them to command higher prices for their products and services (i.e. tourism, trade, or consumer goods) compared to rivals (Papadopoulos, 2004), thereby contributing significantly to the development and prosperity on nations.

For instance, countries like Singapore and Switzerland, known for their stable political environments, strong institutions, and business-friendly policies, have been able to attract significant FDI inflows and establish themselves as global financial hubs. Furthermore, in

the realm of consumer goods and services, Swiss watches are synonymous with precision, luxury, and craftsmanship, allowing Swiss watchmakers to command premium prices in the global market. Similarly, Italian fashion brands like Gucci and Prada capitalize on Italy's reputation for style and design excellence to justify their premium pricing strategies

### **Gives Agency to Countries Wishing to Control their Image and Narratives**

One of the ways in which nation branding empowers countries is by allowing them to control their own narrative, shaping how they are perceived by the international community, which in turn can influence various aspects of their future. Instead of being defined solely by external perceptions or historical events, nations can reframe their perception by highlighting their unique attributes and achievements.

For example, a country might focus on promoting its cultural heritage, natural beauty, economic opportunities, or technological advancements to attract investment, tourism, and talent. Accordingly, nations that fail to brand themselves may well find their image sabotaged by others, irrespective of the fact that reality may often be quite different. The discourse underlying this claim is certainly attractive for countries in Africa that suffer from what Anholt (2007: 75) terms a negative 'continent brand effect', in which more progressive parts of the continent are painted with the same brush. Proponents argue that branding offers Africans the means to take control of their narrative and thereby shape a new future. (Browning and de Oliveira, 2016: 2).

### **Levels the International Playing Field for Countries**

In today's globalised landscape, where the success and relevance of a nation are increasingly measured in terms of its brand value and marketability, nation branding emerges as a more effective paradigm/lens for understanding nations and international relations compared to traditional political models and frameworks. The concept is rooted in neoliberal ideologies, which posit that free markets are synonymous with political liberty (Kaneva, 2016: 179) and which prioritise market mechanisms and individual agency in shaping global dynamics (Anholt, 2006: 2).

By granting all nations, irrespective of their scale or geopolitical standing, the platform and opportunity to assert their identities and distinguish themselves amidst a saturated international marketplace of ideas and imagery, nation branding is viewed as a mechanism for levelling the economic playing field, allowing countries to compete globally (Anholt, 2003).

Taken together, nation branding offers not only tactical guidance but also a deeper understanding of how countries can transform the perception of nationhood into a product to be marketed and consumed in the global marketplace. For instance, countries such as Estonia and Costa Rica have provided positive proof that proactive nation branding works (City Nation Place, 2020). This offers the prospect of a 'post-political' concept of nationhood, which suggests a departure from traditional political paradigms towards a framework influenced by market-driven forces such as consumer preferences, global trends, and economic competitiveness (Kaneva, 2016: 180).

## How Kenya has Employed Nation Branding to Enhance Its Competitive Identity

The study focused on three key aspects of the economy, which are the main focus and beneficiaries of nation branding in Kenya: tourism, investment promotion and exports.

### Tourism Marketing

National branding has been a cornerstone of Kenya's tourism marketing strategy, significantly influencing the country's global appeal and competitiveness. The Kenya Tourism Board (KTB), a state corporation established and regulated under the Tourism Act No. 28 of 2011, acts as the custodian of Kenya's national tourism brand and plays a pivotal role in marketing Kenya as a world-class travel destination. As the national tourism marketing authority, KTB's core mandate includes formulating, implementing and coordinating a national tourism marketing strategy for Kenya (KTB, 2024). Through these efforts, KTB ensures that Kenya's brand remains competitive, relevant, and appealing in the global tourism market.

Through its flagship initiative, the "Magical Kenya" campaign, KTB leverages nation branding to promote the country's diverse tourism ecosystem and attract visitors from around the globe. The "Magical Kenya" campaign serves as a cornerstone of these branding efforts, aiming to reshape perceptions and enhance the country's visibility in the competitive global tourism market. By employing integrated marketing and communication strategies including online advertisements, social media campaigns, and events, KTB crafts and disseminates a compelling and authentic narrative. This narrative highlights Kenya's stunning landscapes, rich cultural heritage, warm, friendly people and unique wildlife experiences that resonates with a wide range of traveler demographics (Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife, 2022: 10). Recently, KTB unveiled a new campaign dubbed "Ziara Kenya: One Diaspora, One Tourist," which aims to harness the influence of over four million Kenyans living abroad to help promote their homeland through their networks within the host countries as a premier tourist destination (Mwita, 2025).

In addition to KTB's efforts, other entities such as the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) and the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife have played a pivotal role in promoting Kenya as a premier tourism destination. In 2005, KWS launched a park branding initiative that was designed to unlock the tourism potential of Kenya's national parks and reserves by creating distinct brands for each park and emphasising the diversity of experiences (e.g. walking with rangers, horse-riding, cultural interaction) (Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife, 2022: 18). These branding efforts were complemented by infrastructure improvements, enhanced visitor facilities, and community-driven projects aimed at benefiting local populations and fostering positive relationships with communities adjacent to the parks (The Standard, 2011).

Previously, the Kenyan Government, through the Ministry of Tourism, has leveraged its cultural diversity through the "Kenya: A Land of Diverse Cultures" nationwide initiative, which celebrated and showcased the rich tapestry of Kenyan heritage. As part of this endeavour, individuals are identified as "Cultural Ambassadors" to represent and articulate

their respective cultures to both fellow Kenyans and the global community. In the Country Brand Ranking Tourism Edition 2024-2025, Kenya ranks 88th worldwide and 7th in its region, highlighting its potential as a tourist destination (The Place Brand Observer, 2024).

## **Investment Promotion**

Aiming to attract FDI and stimulate economic growth, Kenya, one of Africa's 'frontier economies', has invested significant resources and efforts in branding itself as an investment-friendly destination. This strategic focus on investment promotion is evident in various initiatives, policies, and marketing campaigns implemented by the Kenyan government and relevant agencies. Kenya has established dedicated agencies to promote investment and facilitate the entry of foreign investors into the country.

The Kenya Investment Authority (KenInvest), established under the Investment Promotion Act No. 6 of 2004, serves as the primary agency responsible for investment promotion and facilitation. KenInvest's core functions include providing detailed information on investment opportunities, assisting investors in obtaining necessary licenses and permits, and offering aftercare services to ensure a smooth project implementation (KenInvest, 2023). To streamline administrative procedures and enhance transparency, KenInvest operates a One-Stop Centre, which consolidates key government services under one roof. This approach significantly reduces bureaucratic delays and simplifies the investment process. In addition to facilitation, the agency also plays a critical role in policy advocacy, regularly reviewing the investment environment and recommending reforms to enhance competitiveness and reduce bureaucratic hurdles.

Recent efforts have focused on modernising the regulatory framework, as highlighted by the draft Kenya Investment Promotion and Facilitation Bill 2023. This bill seeks to align investment policy with constitutional requirements, simplify procedures, and introduce digital platforms to facilitate investment, reflecting the evolving needs of both local and foreign investors (Kenya News Agency, 2024). Central to KenInvest's strategy of enhancing Kenya's international profile as an attractive investment destination is the high-profile Kenya International Investment Conference, which serves as a strategic platform for Kenya to highlight its vast investment opportunities and economic potential. (Ministry of Investments, Trade and Industry, 2023).

In addition to KenInvest, Kenya has other sector-specific initiatives and institutions involved in investment promotion. These include the Export Processing Zone Authority (EPZA), Vision 2030 Delivery Secretariat, Konza Technopolis Development Authority (KOTDA), LAPSSET Corridor Development Authority (LCDA), Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA), Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KNCCI) and the Kenya Association of Manufacturers (KAM).

Kenya has undertaken policy reforms to create an enabling environment for investment and business development. This includes measures to streamline regulations, reduce bureaucratic barriers, and improve the ease of doing business. Reforms such as the introduction of online business registration systems, tax incentives for investors, and the establishment of special economic zones demonstrate Kenya's commitment to fostering a conducive investment climate. Kenya has invested in infrastructure development to

enhance its attractiveness as an investment destination. Projects such as the highway construction, port development, airport expansion, and energy infrastructure aim to improve connectivity, logistics, and access to markets for investors.

Despite these efforts, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) World Investment Report 2023 shows Kenya's FDI inflows for 2023 at USD 1,504 million, a decrease of USD 93 million. Meanwhile, FDI outflows were USD 588 million, a decrease of USD 914 million, indicating a mixed investment landscape (The Place Brand Observer, 2024).

## Exports Promotion

For close to two decades, Kenya has employed nation branding tools and strategies to promote its exports and enhance access to its products in international markets (Mugo and Mwencha, 2017). A key milestone was the establishment of the Brand Kenya Board (BKB) in 2008, a state corporation that was mandated "to positively influence the identity and the perception of Kenya by the various publics" (Brand Kenya Board, 2012). With this objective in mind, the BKB introduced an identity mark, commonly referred to as the "made-in tag," for all Kenyan products between 2009 and 2012. The aim was to enhance the competitiveness of these products on the international stage. Additionally, BKB developed the slogan "A Touch of Kenya" to promote Kenyan goods and services, both domestically and internationally (Kimonye, 2012). Over time, BKB's mandate evolved to include a stronger focus on promoting exports and enhancing the competitiveness of Kenyan products and services in international markets. As a result, it was merged with the Export Promotion Council (EPC). It changed its name to the Kenya Exports Promotion and Branding Agency (KEPROBA), a state-funded entity whose mandate is to implement export promotion and nation branding initiatives and policies.

Through strategic initiatives led by KEPROBA, the country has undertaken a robust international branding campaign to position Kenya as a source of high-quality, competitive, and authentic goods and services. These promotional activities are organised under KEPROBA's Kenya Export Market Development Programme (KEMDP), which provides an annual calendar of events to guide and coordinate export market development efforts. The KEMDP is a consultative process involving both public and private sector stakeholders who submit their activities to the Agency for collation and analysis (KEPROBA, 2024: 5).

KEPROBA employs three distinct branding initiatives—Made in Kenya (for manufacturers), Grown in Kenya (for agricultural products), and Proudly Kenyan (for services)—to enhance the visibility and competitiveness of Kenyan products and services in both local and international markets. By promoting these three distinct areas—manufacturing, agriculture, and services—KEPROBA is creating a comprehensive brand identity for Kenya that encourages local pride and fosters international recognition of Kenyan excellence across multiple industries. Thanks to its efforts, total exports in 2020 grew by 7.8 per cent to KES 642 billion compared to KES 595 billion in 2019 (KEPROBA, 2021).

As part of its strategy to foster export-led growth, Kenya has identified key value chains with significant potential to drive economic development and expand its export product offerings. These priority sectors include leather and leather products, dairy, edible oils,

textiles and apparel, the blue economy, tea, coffee, and meat products (KEPROBA, 2024: 5). Recognising the need to diversify beyond traditional markets, Kenya has focused on expanding into new and emerging markets such as Asia, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe. KEPROBA has spearheaded this effort by organising trade missions, participating in international expos, and conducting targeted promotional campaigns aimed at boosting Kenyan exports in these non-traditional destinations. These initiatives are designed to reduce dependency on traditional markets like the European Union and North America, which have historically dominated Kenya's export portfolio (KEPSA, 2024).

The impact of the aggressive expansion of international markets for its products is beginning to materialise. According to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) (2025: 158) Economic Survey 2025, Kenya's exports hit a historic KES 1.1 trillion, driven by tea, oils, fruits, coffee, apparel, and jet fuel. The growth in exports was largely attributed to a 77.3 per cent surge in re-exports, while domestic exports recorded a modest 2.9 per cent increase—from KES 906.32 billion in 2023 to KES 932.15 billion in 2024—signalling a steady export performance (KNBS, 2025:150). The Bloom Consulting Country Brand Ranking Trade Edition 2024 -2025 places Kenya 75th globally and 9th regionally, reflecting its competitive trade environment (The Place Brand Observer, 2024).

## **Challenges Facing Kenya's Nation Branding Efforts**

Branding a nation is a complex and multidimensional process that poses significant challenges to those in charge. These challenges are discussed in the following section.

### **Multifaceted Nature of a Nation Brand**

Despite the existence of a nation branding agency and various sector-specific branding initiatives, Kenya continues to face challenges in creating a competitive and coherent nation brand, much like many other African countries. The primary hurdle facing Kenya's nation branding efforts lies in the complexity of conveying a coherent, cohesive and consistent image or message that resonates with diverse target audiences, both domestically and internationally, resulting in an "identity-image disparity."

One reason for this difficulty is Kenya's multifaceted identity, comprising a rich and diverse cultural heritage, natural landscapes, abundant wildlife, and economic activities. Similar to many nations, Kenya grapples with its competing and conflicting identities, with different facets of its national identity gaining prominence on the global stage at different junctures (O'Shaughenssy and O'Shaughenssy, 2000; Fan, 2010). Attempting to encapsulate all these facets into a singular brand message presents a challenge, as each aspect may appeal to different target audiences. For instance, while some tourists may be drawn to Kenya for its safari experiences, others may be interested in its sandy beaches or the warm, sunny weather.

This complexity is further compounded by different stakeholders within the country who may promote competing narratives about the country's identity and priorities. For example, while the tourism sector may emphasise Kenya's natural beauty and wildlife, other sectors such as agriculture or technology may focus on different aspects of the nation's identity.

Harmonising these narratives to create a unified nation brand message and strategy can be a daunting challenge. However, neglecting significant constituencies may create an “identity-image gap” for a nation, where its true essence is not accurately perceived by the global community, fostering the prevalence of stereotypes, clichés, and even racism in perceptions of certain nations (Dinnie, 2008, p. 42).

## **Contested Nature of National Identity**

Defining a country’s identity accurately is difficult due to the complexity of constructing a national identity (Dinnie, 2016), as national identity is always a terrain of conflict between competing groups in society (Larrain, 2007: 4). The idea of a national identity is typically constructed based on the interests and perspectives of dominant societal groups through a variety of cultural institutions such as the media, educational, religious and military institutions, state apparatuses, etc. (Larrain, 2007: 4).

In Kenya, these contentious issues have been brought to the fore by historical events such as the post-election violence of 2007/2008, which highlighted the deep-seated ethnic divisions and the fragility of national unity. The recurring discussions about constitutional amendments, devolution, and inclusivity in governance have further underscored the significance of national identity and cohesion in Kenya’s socio-political landscape (Ng’eno, 2023).

However, a major shift in Kenya’s national identity discourse is being driven by younger generations, shaped by a mix of global influences and local realities, who are increasingly vocal about rejecting tribalism and embracing a more inclusive, modern Kenyan identity. During the recent nationwide protests and advocacy movements, many young Kenyans (also referred to as Gen-Z) disavowed traditional tribal affiliations, calling for unity beyond ethnic lines and pushing for a national identity that reflects their shared aspirations for a progressive, just, and equitable society. By pushing for greater representation and engagement in shaping Kenya’s future, their voices can serve as both a challenge and an opportunity for the broader national identity discourse.

## **Multiplicity of Government and Private Sector Actors**

In Kenya, nation branding efforts involve a multitude of actors drawn from both the public and private sectors working to shape the country’s image and promote it on the global stage. These entities have fragmented and overlapping mandates, cutting across several government agencies and sectors, and each of them brings unique perspectives, resources, and expertise to the table. However, despite their collective endeavours, Kenya’s branding initiatives are often poorly coordinated, resulting in disjointed and competing promotional projects and initiatives. This results in poorly orchestrated promotional initiatives characterised by duplication of efforts, conflicting messaging, and inefficient use of resources.

Different actors may pursue their branding agendas independently, leading to disjointed campaigns that fail to convey a unified message about Kenya’s identity and offerings. Additionally, competition among actors for funding and recognition can further exacerbate fragmentation in branding efforts. According to Anholt (2007), this state of affairs is a

characteristic of most nation branding efforts. He points out the tendency for governmental departments and various other actors to run unsynchronised, haphazard campaigns whose consequences are unintended.

### **Nation Brandings is Still Largely Government-Driven and Controlled**

The Kenyan government has traditionally taken the lead in initiating and overseeing nation branding efforts, exerting significant influence over the strategy, messaging, and implementation by the various nation branding agencies. For example, entities like KEPROBA, which aims to promote Kenya's image globally, and KTB, whose focus is on projecting Kenya as a top tourist destination, are state-owned corporations.

However, these government-led approaches are often viewed with scepticism by segments of the public who may interpret these efforts as politically motivated propaganda or lacking in authenticity. For instance, while the "Magical Kenya" campaign was relatively successful in attracting international tourists, some Kenyans viewed it as disconnected from the real socio-economic challenges they face. Additionally, the over-reliance on government for funding can limit the scope and impact of nation branding initiatives, making it harder to compete with countries that engage the private sector or other stakeholders to fund and shape their branding efforts.

To mitigate these issues, Kenya could benefit from a more inclusive approach by involving private sector players, civil society, and ordinary citizens in co-creating its nation brand, ensuring it feels more representative and credible to both the local population and the global audience.

### **Conclusion**

It is apparent from the discussions in this chapter that, as in many other African countries, creating an authentic, competitive and coherent nation brand remains a challenge for Kenya. To build a strong and compelling national identity that resonates globally, it is necessary to bridge the gap between a nation's identity and its projected image.

To do this, nation branding efforts should be based on attributes and characteristics that are authentic, credible, and relevant to the country's culture, heritage, and socio-economic context, while clearly reflecting its unique strengths, values, and aspirations. Moreover, efforts aimed at aligning its internal identity with its external image should include consistent governance reforms, infrastructure development, and robust anti-corruption measures. Additionally, nation branding requires the integration and embedding of various policies, tools, and elements across all sectors of society and the economy, including education, tourism, trade, and diplomacy. This will help to foster a unified and favourable portrayal of the nation at both domestic and international levels. However, it requires robust coordination and collaboration among governmental bodies, private enterprises, and cultural institutions.

Redefining and rejuvenating Kenya's national identity is a crucial step in unlocking the country's untapped potential and positioning it for sustainable growth and prosperity in an increasingly interconnected world. Nation branding offers Kenya a strategic opportunity to redefine its identity and move beyond traditional, ethnocentric, and inward-oriented

identities focused on safaris and ethnic diversity. These occasionally overshadow the country's potential on the global stage, and instead present itself as a modern, globally oriented emerging economic powerhouse with cutting-edge infrastructure, technological advancements, and sustainable initiatives.

Kenya can leverage its reputation as a leader in technological innovation, as demonstrated by the success of mobile money platforms like M-Pesa, which has showcased Kenya as a hub for tech-driven financial inclusion and innovation across Africa. A good example of how the country is attempting to craft this new, modern identity is by promoting Kenya's tech sector through the "Silicon Savannah" narrative, which seeks to rebrand Nairobi as a thriving hub for technological innovation and entrepreneurship. This narrative has positioned Kenya as a leader in Africa's technology revolution, helping to draw significant attention from international investors and corporations. By building on such advancements and highlighting infrastructure developments like Konza Technopolis, the Nairobi Expressway and the Lamu Port-South-Sudan-Ethiopia-Transport (LAPSSET) Corridor, Kenya can project an image of progress and competitiveness on the global stage. Moreover, embracing diversity and fostering social cohesion, ensuring that all ethnic and cultural groups feel represented and valued, will further strengthen national unity and attract global partnerships.

For Kenya to establish a strong and competitive nation brand, it is essential to adopt a multi-stakeholder approach that includes the active participation of government agencies, private sector organisations, civil society, academia, media, and the general public. Nation branding should be a collaborative process where all stakeholders contribute input, provide feedback, and mobilise support for branding initiatives. Furthermore, continuous communication with stakeholders throughout the process fosters engagement and commitment.

This inclusive approach fosters a sense of ownership and pride in Kenya's national identity, ensuring that the country's image is collectively shaped and promoted by a wide array of voices. By actively engaging these diverse stakeholders, Kenya can create a well-coordinated and strategically aligned nation branding effort that resonates with both local and international audiences. Ultimately, it is through an inclusive and well-coordinated multi-stakeholder approach to nation branding that the country can effectively develop and communicate its unique identity and competitive advantages to the world.

## References

- African Media Agency (2025). 2025 Brand Africa 100: Africa's Best Brands.
- Anholt, S. (2007a). Brand Africa: What Is Competitive Identity? *African Analyst*, 2(2): 72–81.
- Anholt, S. (2007b). *Competitive Identity: The New Brand Management for Nations, Cities and Regions*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Anholt, S. (2013). *Beyond the Nation Brand: The Role of Image and Identity in International Relations*. Exchange: The Journal of Public Diplomacy, 2(1), 1-7.
- Aronczyk, M. (2008a). *Branding the Nation: Mediating Space, Value, and Identity in the Context of Global Culture*. Unpublished PhD Thesis. New York: New York University.

- Aronczyk, M. (2008b). *Living the Brand: Nationality, globality and the identity strategies of nation branding consultants*. *International Journal of Communication*, 2, 41–65
- Aronczyk, M. (2013). *Branding the Nation: The Global Business of National Identity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Avlonitis, G. J. (2018). *The Linkage Between Nation Branding and Nation Competitiveness*. Available at: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/greeceatlse/2018/01/15/nation-branding-and-nation-competitiveness/> (visited on 25 August 2023)
- Benedetti, J., Çakmak, E. and Dinnie, K. (2011). The competitive identity of Brazil as a Dutch holiday destination. *Place Brand Public Diplomacy*, 7, 107–115. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1057/pb.2011.10>.
- Boan, B. (2022). *Nation Branding: The Case for Marketing Strategy in International Relations*. Senior Theses. University of Southern California 532. Available at: [https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/senior\\_theses/532?utm\\_source=scholarcommons.sc.edu%2Fsenior\\_theses%2F532&utm\\_medium=PDF&utm\\_campaign=PDFCoverPages](https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/senior_theses/532?utm_source=scholarcommons.sc.edu%2Fsenior_theses%2F532&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages).
- Brand Africa (2025). *What is Brand Africa?* <https://www.brandafrica.org/Home/FAQs#q1>.
- Browning, C. (2015). *Nation Branding, National Self-Esteem, and the Constitution of Subjectivity in Late Modernity*. *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 11, 195–214.
- Browning, C. (2016). *Nation branding and development: poverty panacea or business as usual?* *Journal of International Relations and Development*, 19, 50–75. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1057/jird.2014.14>.
- Browning, C.S. and de Oliveira, A.F. (2016). *Reading Brand Africa Geopolitically: Nation Branding, Subaltern Geopolitics and the Persistence of Politics*. *Geopolitics*, 22:3, 640–664. Available at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2016.1253006>.
- Browning, C.S. and de Oliveira, A.F. (2017). *Introduction: Nation Branding and Competitive Identity in World Politics*. *Geopolitics*, 1-25, DOI: 10.1080/14650045.2017.1329725.
- Carah, N. and Louw, E. (2016). The Apologetic Brand: Building Australia’s Brand on a Postcolonial Apology. In *Commercial Nationalism: Selling the Nation and Nationalizing the Sell*, edited by Volcic Zala, Andrejevic Mark, 27–45. London: Routledge.
- Del Percio, A. (2016). *Nation Brands and the Politics of Difference*. *Signs and Society*, 4 (1), S1-S28.
- Dinnie, K. (2008). *Nation branding: Concepts, Issues, Practice*. Oxford, United Kingdom: Butterworth-Heinemann, Elsevier.
- Dinnie, K. (2015). *Nation Branding: Concepts, Issues, Practice*. London: Routledge.
- Fan, Y. (2006). *Branding the nation: what is being branded?* *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 12(1), 5-14.
- Fan, Y. (2010). *Branding the nation: Towards a better understanding*. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, 6, 97–103. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1057/pb.2010.16>.
- Graan, A. (2016). *The Nation Brand Regime: Nation Branding and the Semiotic Regimentation of Public Communication in Contemporary Macedoni*. *Signs and Society*, 4 (1), 70-105.

Hao, A.W., Paul, J., Trott, S., Guo, C. and Wu, H.-H. (2019). *Two decades of research on nation branding: a review and future research agenda*. *International Marketing Review*, 38(1), 46-69. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1108/IMR-01-2019-0028>.

Jehangir, M. (2023). Nation Branding: The Soft Power Shaping International Perceptions. 4 November. Available at: <https://bnnbreaking.com/breaking-news/economy/nation-branding-the-soft-power-shaping-international-perceptions/> (visited on 25 September 2023).

Kaneva, N. (2016). Nation Branding and Commercial Nationalism: Notes for a Materialist Critique. In: Volcic, Z., Andrejevic, M. (eds). *Commercial Nationalism*. Palgrave Studies in Communication for Social Change. Palgrave Macmillan, London. [https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137500991\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137500991_1).

Kaneva, N. (2017). *The branded national imagination and its limits: Insights from the post-socialist experience*. *Strategic Review for Southern Africa*, 39 (1), 116-138.

KEPSA. (2024). *KEPSA CEO meets KEPROBA CEO to explore partnerships to enhance the competitiveness of Kenyan SMEs*. 8 October. Available at: <https://kepsa.or.ke/kepsanews/kepsa-ceo-meets-keproba-ceo-to-explore-partnerships-to-enhance-the-competitiveness-of-kenyan-smes>.

KEPROBA. (2021). *Annual Report 2020 – 2021*. Available at <https://keproba-bucket.s3.eu-central-1.amazonaws.com/downloads/1660215270-40790.pdf> (visited on 23 August 2023).

KEPROBA. (2024). *Kenya Export Market Development Programme 2024*. Available at: [https://issuu.com/makeitkenya/docs/2023-24\\_final\\_kenya\\_export\\_market\\_development\\_prog](https://issuu.com/makeitkenya/docs/2023-24_final_kenya_export_market_development_prog) (visited on 12 May 2025).

Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) (2025). *Economic Survey 2025*. Nairobi: KNBS. Available at: <https://www.knbs.or.ke/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/2025-Economic-Survey.pdf>.

Kenya News Agency. (2024). KenInvest keen to improve investment in the country. 14 February. Available at: <https://www.kenyanews.go.ke/keninvest-keen-to-improve-vestment-in-the-country/>.

Kenya Tourism Board (KTB). (2024). *Who We Are*. KTB Website. Available at: <https://ktb.go.ke/background>.

Kimonye, M. (2012). Kenya's Branding Journey. *Diplomat East Africa*. In: Mugo, M. and Mwencha, P.M. (2017). *Applying Anholt's national branding model: The case of Kenya*. Nairobi: Multimedia University of Kenya. Available at: <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/599c/56436e28d770e2e886b8e8ee7da4ced5de79.pdf>.

Kotler, P. and Gertner, D. (2002). *Country as brand, product, and beyond: a place marketing and brand management perspective*. *Journal of Brand Management*, 9 (4/5), 249-261.

Larrain, J. (2007). Identity and Diversity: Could a Pan-American identity be constructed? In (Ed. Michèle Rioux) *Building the Americas*, pp. 277 – 286. Bruxelles: Emile Bruylant, S.A.

Lee, J.-Y. (2021). *Nation Brand, National Prestige, and the Social Imaginaries of the Advanced Nation in South Korea*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. University of

Massachusetts Amherst. Available at: <https://scholarworks.umass.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/4be11079-317b-4be9-84ae-84b8297f509d/content>.

Melissen, J. (2005). The New Public Diplomacy: Between Theory and Practice. In: Jan Melissen, ed., *The New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power in International Relations*, 3–27, Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ministry of Investments, Trade and Industry. (2023). *Kenya Launches 3rd Kenya International Investment Conference to Foster Economic Growth*. Investment promotion News, 22 May. Available at: <https://investmentpromotion.go.ke/kenya-launches-3rd-kenya-international-investment-conference-foster-economic-growth#:~:text=In%20a%20notable%20development%2C%20the%20Cabinet%20Secretary%2C,55%20Trade%20Ministers%20and%20CEOs%20of%20the>.

Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife (May 2022). *New Tourism Strategy for Kenya 2021-2025*. Available at: <https://tourism.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/New-Tourism-Strategy-for-Kenya-2021-2025.pdf>.

Morgan, N., Pritchard, A. and Pride, R. (2011). *Destination Brands: Managing Place Reputation*. London: Routledge.

Mugo, M. and Mwencha, P. M. (2017). *Applying Anholt's National Branding Model: The Case of Kenya*. Business and Economics Journal, 8 (4), 1-6. DOI: 10.4172/2151-6219.1000335.

Mwita, M. (2025). *Kenya taps foreign missions in the country to drive tourism growth*. The Star, 15 May. Available at: <https://www.the-star.co.ke/business/kenya/2025-05-15-kenya-taps-foreign-missions-in-the-country-to-drive-tourism-growth>.

Mzembi, W. (2014). *Experiences with branding Zimbabwe and the way forward. Ministerial Speech given at the Zimtrade Annual Exporters' Conference 2014* (theme: creating brand Zimbabwe).

Ng'eno, G. K. (2023). *National Identity and Cohesion in Kenya: A Socio-Political Discourse*. European Journal of Conflict Management, 3(2), pp 38–53.

Papadopoulos, N. (2004). *Place Branding: Evolution, Meaning and Implications*. Place Branding, 1(1): 36–49.

Papadopoulos, N. and Hamzaoui-Essoussi, L. (2015). *Place Images and Nation Branding in the African Context: Challenges, Opportunities, and Questions for Policy and Research*. Africa Journal of Management, 1(1), 54 - 77. DOI: 10.1080/23322373.2015.994423.

Pop, N.A. and Macovei, I. (2007). *Competitive Identity of Nations and its Positioning Vectors. Case Study Brand Romania*.

Qobo, M. (2021). *Africa's Foreign Policy and Nation Branding: Regional Leadership and Its Discontents*. The Strategic Review for Southern Africa, 39(1), 9-28. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.35293/srsa.v39i1.319>.

Sena, S. (2012). *Nation Branding: Case Study of Zimbabwe*. Unpublished PhD Thesis. Faculty of Business and Economic Science, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. Available at: <https://core.ac.uk/reader/145053760>.

Szondi, G. (2008). *Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding: Conceptual Similarities and Differences, Discussion Papers in Diplomacy*. Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael', ISSN 1569-2981.

Temporal, P. (2022). *Dr Paul Temporal: Soft power and Nation Branding: Strategy & Structure*. Brand Finance, 15 March. Available at: <https://brandfinance.com/insights/2022-soft-power-paul-temporal> (visited on 25 August 2023).

The Place Brand Observer. (2024). *Kenya – Country Performance, Brand Strength and Reputation*. 1 August. Available at: <https://placebrandobserver.com/kenya-country-performance-brand-strength-reputation/#:~:text=The%20Bloom%20Consulting%20Country%20Brand,reflecting%20its%20competitive%20trade%20environment>.

The Standard. (2011). *Move over 'Big Five', parks get new branding*. 8 December. Available at: <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/business/article/2000047961/move-over-big-five-parks-get-new-branding>.

Van Ham, P. (2001). *The Rise of the Brand State: The Postmodern Politics of Image and Reputation*. *Foreign Affairs*, 8(5): 2–6.

Yapraklı, T. Ş., Absalan, A. and Ünalın, M. (2020). *The Relationship Between Country Branding Components and Competitive Advantage*. *Yönetim ve Ekonomi*, 27(1), 169-181.

# Chapter Four

## Assessing the Policy-Implementation Gap in the Paris Agreement: A Case Study of Kenya and Sudan

Susan Onyango Handa and Alice Nyawira Karuri

### Abstract

The COMESA comprises 21 member states who are all parties to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Policy cohesion and joint action within and between COMESA countries are therefore essential due to shared natural resources, trans-boundary communities, and inter-dependent economic goals. This chapter assesses the policy implementation gap in Kenya and Sudan in implementing the Paris Agreement, using secondary documents and a thematic analysis. Kenya and Sudan were purposively selected based on their ranking as the two highest carbon emitters among the Sub-Saharan COMESA countries. They are, however, differentiated by heterogeneity in climate-related challenges, geopolitical circumstances, and development priorities. The specific objectives of the study are to identify the climate challenges, map the national climate policy and regulatory framework geared towards the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and examine the implementation challenges. This study is guided by the Green theory, which takes cognisance of the complexities of climate action. It finds that the policy implementation gap occurs for various reasons, including a lack of resources, lack of political will, conflicting interests within various groups in the country, and development priorities that undermine certain policies. This chapter posits that while policy cohesion towards climate action within countries remains problematic, policy harmonisation between countries has the potential for effectual climate action.

**Keywords:** COMESA, Paris Agreement, Policy Harmonisation, Policy Cohesion, Climate Policy, Climate Action, Implementation Gap

### Introduction

This chapter aims to assess the policy implementation gap among COMESA countries in implementing the Paris Agreement. COMESA member States have agreed to several principles in conformity with the objectives stated in Article 3 of the Treaty Establishing COMESA. These principles include the harmonisation of policies and programmes among the member States (UNECA, 2015). Policy harmonisation refers to the process of creating common standards, rules, and procedures across different jurisdictions or sectors to facilitate cooperation, reduce inconsistencies, and improve the effectiveness of policy implementation (Hoekman and KostECKI, 2009). It therefore focuses on collaboration and

cooperation among multiple actors or regions to enable a coordinated approach to common challenges that require coordinated efforts.

This poses a potential challenge due to divergent interests that may lead to ineffective action and potentially result in conflict. Policy cohesion, on the other hand, refers to the degree of alignment, consistency, and mutual support among policies across different sectors and levels of governance in pursuing common goals (Tosun and Lang, 2017). This chapter focuses on policy cohesion and policy harmonisation within and among COMESA countries with the goal of achieving the NDCs.

The specific objectives of the study are to identify the climate challenges, map the national climate policy and regulatory framework geared towards the NDCs and examine the implementation challenges. The analysis employs an explanatory research design using a case study method. Data analysis is undertaken through document and thematic analysis. The key documents reviewed are the case study countries, NDCs, country sectoral policies, and literature detailing implementation challenges.

The rationale of this study is premised on the fact that parties to the Paris Agreement harmonise their climate-related policies with the Agreement to meet their NDCs. COMESA countries are all Parties to the Paris Agreement and are therefore obliged to structure their climate policies and regulatory frameworks towards the achievement of their NDCs. Effective climate action, however, cannot be solely achieved by individual member countries due to shared natural resources, common climate-related challenges, fluidity in transboundary communities, and a common free trade area. COMESA countries therefore have an impetus for climate policy cohesion in the region to ensure the protection of natural resources, security of their communities and economic growth through the facilitation of regional trade.

National development priorities, however, are shaped by factors other than environmental protection, economic growth, and social equity. Factors such as popular interests, the need to consolidate political power, international financial obligations, and private interests can have a significant influence on national policy formulation, the extent of regional policy cohesion, and policy implementation.

Despite the stated aim of joint climate action and the benefits that would accrue from it, national interests may therefore take precedence over regional priorities. Effective climate action in the COMESA region is contingent on climate policy harmonisation with the Paris Agreement and policy cohesion among member countries. This study, therefore, assesses the necessity for collaborative effort by COMESA countries in implementing the Paris Agreement.

Kenya and Sudan were purposively selected as case studies for this analysis. This was premised on their being the highest carbon emitters among the Sub-Saharan COMESA countries, with Sudan's carbon emissions at an estimated 21 million metric tonnes (MT) and Kenya with close to 20 million MT in 2021 (Sasu, 2024). They, however, have a similar carbon emission level of 0.5 t/capita (Ritchie et al., 2024a; Ritchie et al., 2024b). Their selection was further informed by the heterogeneity in their natural resource base and climate-related challenges, their geopolitical importance, and the interplay of economic, environmental, and social influences within and among them.

## **The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement**

The UNFCCC was adopted in 1992 and serves as the overarching framework for international climate action. Parties to the UNFCCC are required to report periodically on the Convention through a National Communication (NC) that accounts for ‘Common But Differentiated Responsibilities’ (CBDR) and specific national and regional development priorities, objectives, and circumstances.

Information required on these communications includes national circumstances, greenhouse gas inventory, measures to mitigate climate change, and vulnerability and adaptation to climate change (United Nations, 1992). UNFCCC recognises the varying resources and capabilities of developed and developing countries, which are reflected in the categorisation of countries into Annex 1 and non-Annex 1 countries. Annex 1 are mostly developed countries while Annex 2 countries majorly comprise developing countries. Kenya and Sudan are both non-Annex 1 countries. National responsibility pertaining to climate action is premised on a country’s categorisation.

The Paris Agreement was adopted in 2015 at the twenty-first session of the Conference of the Parties (COP21) to the UNFCCC and came into force on November 4, 2016. It is a legally binding agreement with 194 states, plus the EU, being parties. The primary aim of the Paris Agreement is to address climate change by limiting global warming to below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, and pursuing efforts to limit it to 1.5 degrees Celsius. The climate action plans comprise the NDCs of the Parties towards addressing climate change, through cutting emissions and adapting to climate impacts. Every five years, Parties submit their NDCs, which outline their climate action plans and targets, including financial requirements for implementation.

The Agreement has a transparency framework which comprises specific guidelines aimed at promoting clarity and accountability in the reporting and reviewing of progress in NDC implementation. Article 14 of the Paris Agreement calls for periodic global stock-takes by the meeting of Parties to the Paris Agreement (United Nations, 2015). The first stock-take was conducted in 2023 and is scheduled to take place every five years. This assessment of the collective progress towards the long-term goals will inform the NDC.

## **The COMESA and the Climate Action Agenda**

COMESA has 21 member states, a population of over 600 million, with a collective GDP of about USD 805 billion, and a global trade worth USD 324 billion (COMESA, n.d.). It was formed in December 1994 with the stated aim of “promoting regional integration through trade and the development of natural and human resources for the mutual benefit of all people in the region” (COMESA, n.d.). There is a precedent among COMESA member states for joint efforts on climate action. For example, COMESA, EAC, and SADC jointly implemented a programme on climate change adaptation and mitigation in the Tripartite region. The programme received external financial support, with the EU funding ending in 2014, while the Department for International Development (DfID) and Norway’s support ended in 2016. The objective of the COMESA-EAC-SADC Climate Change Programme

was to address the impact of climate change in the region through successful adaptation and mitigation actions, which also build economic and social resilience for present and future generations (COMESA, 2018).

The Africa NDC Hub was launched in 2017 during twenty-third session of the Conference of the Parties (COP23). It has three pillars, which include fostering long-term climate action, mobilising the means of implementation and promoting coordination, advocacy, and partnerships. It has several partner institutions, including COMESA, the African Union and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) (Africa NDC Hub, n.d.).

The COMESA region shares climate vulnerabilities as well as common natural resources. Common challenges therefore affect the livelihoods of communities across COMESA member states, although there are different strategies and capacities to address these. Shared infrastructure to facilitate the movement of people, goods, and services also has implications for achieving the NDCs.

## **Theoretical Framework: The Green Theory**

Green theory, also referred to as green political theory or ecological political theory, is a theory that emerged in the 1960 and 70s as a response to the awareness of the tragedy of the commons. This growing awareness of the need for environmental conservation led to the surge of environmental organisations and the popularisation of environmental issues (Dyer, 2018). According to Günar (2021), the Green theory established its propositions on three claims. The first is to accept ecocentrism, the second is the hypothesis that growth is limited, as it is impossible to maintain development or growth at the expense of depletion of resources, and the third is the need to adopt a decentralised approach. This is based on the premise that it is easier for democratic and local organisations to be accountable and prevent environmental crises.

The Green theory recognises that the interests of long-term ecological value are pursued by all stakeholders through investment in technology and a change in human values. It therefore provides a framework to analyse the complexities faced in addressing adverse climate change. These causes include economic competition and disincentives to cooperation, which Dyer (2018) concludes that international relations theories have been unable to provide. The Green theory focuses on environmentalism and sustainability, based on some common principles that will be used to assess the harmonisation and cohesion of climate-related policies and the attendant regulatory framework. Six principles derived from the Green theory have been used as an analytical framework in this study. These are environmental sustainability, social equity, sustainable economics, long-term planning, and transparency and accountability.

Environmental sustainability is measured and assessed through a variety of indicators and frameworks that evaluate how well a policy aligns with long-term ecological health, resource efficiency, and the reduction of environmental degradation. Some of the key aspects include greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction, energy efficiency and renewable energy adoption, biodiversity and ecosystem health, air, water and soil quality, and climate resilience and adaptation. Environmental sustainability, therefore, focuses on integrating environmental considerations into laws and policies, including responsible

natural resource use, biodiversity protection, pollution prevention, and the carrying out of environmental impact assessments (EIAs) (IPCC, 2014).

Social equity, on the other hand, recognises the link between environmental and social issues and acknowledges that people have different needs and circumstances. It addresses disparities in access to resources and environmental impacts, poverty levels, and conservation efforts. It includes stakeholder engagement, which assesses the input and concerns of various groups, including indigenous communities and their responsibility and capacity to act. T

his is important because, while the Paris Agreement is global, its implementation is often at the national and community levels. Participatory governance and non-violent approaches to addressing environmental and social challenges are also taken into consideration. The principle of social equity in Green theory aligns closely with the concept of environmental justice, which emphasises fair distribution of environmental benefits and burdens across different social groups.

Sustainable economics encompasses economic growth that does not adversely affect the environment and people, for example, sustainable agriculture, renewable energy sources, and waste reduction. Long-term planning is at the core of sustainability, as it takes cognisance of the need to balance current and future needs. Short-term gains and long-term benefits are not necessarily mutually exclusive. However, conventional economic growth has often focused on resource extraction, prioritising short-term gains.

Transparency and accountability are principles of Green theory and are key to the Paris Agreement. These are analysed in various aspects, including the formulation, implementation, measuring and reporting of climate action. In the context of climate policy, long-term planning is exemplified by initiatives like the Paris Agreement's long-term temperature goal and the development of mid-century low-emission development strategies. Cross-sector analysis will assess whether climate-related laws and policies align or contradict each other. These sectors include agriculture, industry, infrastructure, energy and health.

## **Kenya and the Climate Action Agenda**

Kenya has a population of over 52 million (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2025) and a land area of 580,876.3 km<sup>2</sup> (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). The economy is highly vulnerable to climate change, as it depends on rain-fed agriculture, which is its economic mainstay. Agriculture contributes 33 per cent of Kenya's GDP and another 27 per cent indirectly through linkages with other sectors, accounting for over 65 per cent of exports and employing more than 40 per cent of the total population, as well as over 70 per cent of the rural population (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2025).

Nature-based tourism industry is also a major land user, with wildlife protected areas covering 8.2 per cent of land area. Kenya's contribution to global GHG emissions was less than 0.1 per cent in 2019, with per capita emissions of less than 2.06 MtCO<sub>2</sub>eq compared to the global average of 4.92 MtCO<sub>2</sub>eq (Ministry of Environment and Forestry, 2020). This analysis examines Kenya's climate challenges, policy framework, and NDC implementation progress.

## Climate-Related Challenges

Approximately 85 per cent of Kenya's land area is classified as arid and semi-arid land (ASAL), which is largely pastoral. The arable area supports over 80 per cent of the population. Kenya's reliance on domestic agricultural production for food security and livelihoods make it a key focus of climate-related policy, particularly in the context of 98 per cent of agriculture being rain-fed (World Bank, 2021). Droughts and floods are the main climate hazards, impacting multiple sectors, including agriculture, infrastructure, energy, education, and health.

In 2011, for example, the updated NDC reports that drought caused over USD 11 billion worth of damage, with hundreds of thousands of refugees coming into the country from neighbouring countries (Ministry of Environment and Forestry, 2020). The 2014-2018 drought affected 23 of Kenya's 47 counties. As a result, 3.4 million Kenyans were severely food insecure, and half a million did not have access to water (Ministry of Environment and Forestry, 2020).

Floods in 2018 also caused the loss of life and the displacement of 230,000 people, including 150,000 children, and caused the closure of 700 schools. The floods destroyed 8,500 hectares of crops, drowned over 20,000 heads of livestock, and destroyed roads and infrastructure worth billions of shillings (Ministry of Environment and Forestry, 2020).

The June 2024 floods update by the Red Cross, which covered the March-April-May (MAM) rains in Kenya, reported that 43 of the 47 counties were affected. This included more than 100,000 households, of which more than 55,000 were displaced. There were 294 fatalities and 162 missing persons. In terms of infrastructure, 68 roads were destroyed and 151 schools affected. Agriculture was severely impacted, with over 11,000 livestock lost and over 65,000 acres of crops affected (Kenya Red Cross, 2024).

The rising sea level has affected coastal populations and is expected to impact up to 86,000 people annually by 2030. Rising sea temperatures off the Kenyan coast have triggered mass coral bleaching and mortality on coral reef systems over the past two decades, which impacts the amount and diversity of fish species (Ministry of Environment and Forestry, 2020). The glaciers of Kenya's highest mountain, Mt. Kenya, have shrunk to 17 per cent of their original size and are expected to disappear in the next 30 years. This would result in a drastic reduction of the water supply of the River Tana, which carries more than 60 per cent of the country's hydropower (Ministry of Environment and Forestry, 2020). Additionally, it would compromise access to the water supply for agriculture and domestic use.

Kenya is highly vulnerable to climate change impacts and is ranked at 150<sup>th</sup> out of 185 countries by the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN) Index (University of Notre Dame, 2023). Kenya is estimated to lose three per cent to five per cent of its GDP annually to climate change impacts (Ministry of Environment and Forestry, 2020).

According to 2000 estimates highlighted in the second National Communication to the UNFCCC, Kenya's emissions were at 55 MtCO<sub>2</sub>eq. The agricultural sector accounted for 41.01 per cent of emissions, Land use, land-use change, and forestry (LULUCF) for 37.55 per cent, the energy sector for 17.76 per cent, waste 2.19 per cent, while the industrial process sector accounted for 1.48 per cent.

This is bound to change as the country expands its manufacturing, infrastructure, building and construction sectors. It is projected that by 2030, energy will be the leading emission contributor due to increased fossil fuel consumption. Kenya's mean surface temperature is, for example, projected to increase in the range of 1 degree Celsius to 1.5 degree Celsius by 2030. GHG emissions have also increased by 65.2 per cent between 1995 and 2015 (Ministry of Environment and Forestry, 2020).

## **National Climate Regulatory and Policy Framework**

Kenya's first integrated response to climate action was the National Climate Change Response Strategy (NCCRS) crafted in 2010. This was the first national policy document on climate change, and it was operationalised by the first National Climate Change Action Plan (NCCAP), 2013-2018.

The National Adaptation Plan (NAP) was developed in 2015. While the strategy and subsequent plans charted the path for low-carbon and climate-resilient development, the National Climate Change Framework Policy and the Climate Change Act of 2016 aim to facilitate an effective response. The Climate Change Act, 2016, and its 2023 amendments, provide the legal framework for climate change.

The National Action Plan (2015-2030) is detailed in the National Climate Change Action Plan, which is reviewed every five years. The second and current NCCCAP is the 2018-2022. An Adaptation Technical Analysis Report (ATAR) 2018-2022 and a Mitigation Technical Analysis Report (MTAR) 2018-2022, are included as an annex to the NCCAP. These frameworks elaborate on the mitigation and adaptation actions to be undertaken.

The NCCAP also informs the Medium-Term Plans (MTPs), which are the five-year implementation plans of Kenya's Vision 2030, the country's long-term development blueprint, which was initiated in 2008. The MTPs outline the priority economic and social sectors that the national government will focus on during their five-year tenure. These priorities are reflected in the development plans of Kenya's 47 counties, which are the devolved administrative regions created under the 2010 Constitution of Kenya. The national development plan espoused in the MTPs is therefore localised in the concurrent five-year County Integrated Development Plans (CIDPs).

Financing of the NCCAP is through the MTPs (Ministry of Environment and Forestry, 2020). The MTPs are therefore key documents in ensuring the prioritisation of climate finance. Other sectoral policies include the National Policy on Climate Finance, Climate Risk Management Framework, the National Livestock Policy, 2015, the National Oceans and Fisheries Policy, 2008, the Agricultural Sector Transformation and Growth Strategy (ASTGS), 2019-2029, the Kenya Climate Smart Agriculture Strategy, 2017-2028, the Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+), the National Drought Management Authority (NDMA) Act, 2016, the Water Act, 2016, and the Forest Conservation and Management Act (2016) (Ministry of Environment and Forestry, 2020).

Other policies not mentioned in the NDC include the Wildlife Conservation and Management Act, the Forest Conservation and Management Act (FCMA), the Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Policy (REEEP), the National Green Growth Strategy and Implementation

Plan (NGGSIP) and the Energy Act and Feed-in Tariff policy, which provides a regulatory framework for promoting renewable energy investments and grid access for renewable energy. These policies reflect the national efforts towards climate action in both adaptation and mitigation measures. They encompass the sectors most adversely affected by climate change, through their reliance on natural resources such as land, water, wildlife and renewable energy.

## **Nationally Determined Contributions**

The Constitution of Kenya (CoK) 2010 is the foundational pillar for the implementation of climate change action. This is through its bill of rights provisions, such as the right to a clean and healthy environment. Kenya signed the UNFCCC on 12<sup>th</sup> June 1992 and ratified it on 30<sup>th</sup> August 1994. It ratified the Kyoto Protocol in 2005. The First National Communication to the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties was submitted in 2002, and the Second National Communication in 2015. (Government of Kenya, 2015).

The initial NDC was submitted on 28<sup>th</sup> December 2016, and the updated NDC on 24<sup>th</sup> December 2020. This was to fulfil the requirement of an updated NDC by 2020 and every five years thereafter. The initial NDC had a mitigation contribution to abate GHG emissions by 30 per cent by 2030, relative to the business-as-usual (BAU) scenario. The updated NDC targets a reduction of 32 per cent by 2030 relative to the BAU scenario of 143 MtCO<sub>2</sub>eq. The total cost of mitigation and adaptation actions until 2030 is estimated at USD 62 billion (Ministry of Environment and Forestry, 2020).

Of the total budget, 71 per cent is aimed at adaptation activities, while 29 per cent will support mitigation efforts. It is, however, noteworthy that adaptation efforts are expected to endear mitigation action and provide mitigation co-benefits, resulting in mitigation gains. While the first NDC was fully conditional on external support, the updated NDC will mobilise 13 per cent of the budget internally (Ministry of Environment and Forestry, 2020).

The updated NDC builds on the initial NDC, the National Adaptation Plan (2015-2030), the National Climate Change Action Plan (2018-2022), the Third National Inventory Report (NIR3), and other policies and national plans (Ministry of Environment and Forestry, 2020). The priority climate actions outlined in the NDC are implemented through the NCCAPs, as per required by the Climate Change Act, 2016. The Ministry of Environment and Forestry coordinates climate change affairs through the National Climate Change Council and the Climate Change Directorate (Ministry of Environment and Forestry, 2020).

## **Gaps in Implementation**

Challenges in the implementation of the climate actions detailed in the updated NDC are analysed using the green analytical framework, which is based on the six principles discussed above.

**Table 1: Kenya Implementation Analysis - Green Analytical Framework for the NDC**

	Principle	Implementation Analysis
i.	Environmental Sustainability	Agricultural Sector: leading GHG emitter Energy Sector: open-pit mining Environment: regulatory institution challenges Forestry: charcoal production, illegal logging, land-grabbing
ii.	Social Equity	Energy Sector: use of wood-fuel Agricultural Sector: livestock rustling Gender, Youth, and Other Vulnerable Groups: differentiated impact Water and Sanitation: water scarcity
iii.	Sustainable Economies	Agricultural Sector: use of banned agro-chemicals Energy Sector: possible oil, coal and nuclear production Infrastructure: climate-proofing
iv.	Long-Term Planning	The NDC is for the period 2020-2030: longer term required; diversion of resources to address climate-change crisis
v.	Transparency and Accountability	The updated NDC states the process was structured for transparent communication: information reported may be skewed towards positive reports
vi.	Cross-Sector Analysis	Energy Sector Agricultural Sector Health Sector

Note. Analysis based on the principles of the Green Theory

Table 1 above depicts the six components of the Green Analytical Framework, which is used to analyse Kenya's NDC.

Environmental Sustainability is the first component and includes the agricultural sector, energy sector, environment and forestry. As regards the agricultural sector, agriculture was the leading GHG emitter in Kenya in 2015, accounting for 40 per cent of national emissions (Ministry of Environment and Forestry, 2020). This was mostly due to livestock enteric fermentation, manure left on pastures and agricultural soils, and fertiliser application. The energy sector is, however, projected to be the country's leading GHG emitter by 2030. Currently, close to 90 per cent of electricity generated in Kenya comes from renewable energy, with geothermal power being the major contributor (ITA, 2024).

Several energy-related challenges, however, include the continuation of deforestation and possible open-pit mining planned in the Mui basin of Kitui county. This type of mining has high emissions of sulphur dioxide, heavy metals, and harmful GHGs. In June 2019, the National Environment Tribunal revoked a license for the construction of the Lamu Coal Plant. This was after finding that the National Environmental Management Authority (NEMA) had issued the construction license despite the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) being prepared without public consultation or participation (Namwaya, 2019).

Regarding the environment, a proposed activity in the updated NDC is the greening of 14,000 hectares of infrastructure. Forestry is considered a key mitigation measure, and the country aims to achieve a tree cover of at least 10 per cent of land area. This has faced

several challenges, including ongoing and widespread trade in charcoal, land grabbing and illegal logging.

Social equity is the second component of the analytical framework, and the updated NDC states that the process was inclusive and stakeholders were consulted. The NDC notes that increased intensities and magnitudes of climate-related risks aggravate conflicts, mostly over natural resources. It further notes that climate impacts are not gender neutral, impacting men, women and children differently. For example, in the 2018 floods, out of the 230,000 people displaced, 150,000 were children, and 700 schools were closed.

In the energy sector, it is noted that half of Kenya's households use wood fuel for cooking, which poses a challenge to the stated forestry goal of at least 10 per cent of land area. In the agricultural sector, pastoral communities are mostly marginalised and heavily reliant on livestock for their livelihood. Early marriage is particularly rampant during drought seasons, as families hard-hit by livestock loss marry off young girls to obtain a dowry in the form of livestock or other forms of wealth. Livestock rustling also continues to be a challenge despite various measures instituted by local communities, non-state and state institutions. Driving factors include the proliferation of illegal firearms, underfunded security agencies and insufficient collaboration between stakeholders (Muteti, 2024).

The updated NDC prioritised adaptation programmes to strengthen access of vulnerable groups, including youth and women, to enterprise funds, climate, and credit lines. Water and sanitation are also considered as a means of social equity, and water harvesting and storage should be promoted at county and household levels.

The third component is sustainable economies. The updated NDC states that resource requirements for mitigation activities in the 2020-2030 period are USD 17.725 million, with Kenya intending to bear 21 per cent of this cost. The agricultural sector is a key component of a sustainable economy in Kenya, as it is the major economic activity. Activities geared towards increased crop productivity may, however, counter environmental sustainability. This includes the wrong application of fertiliser in a bid towards increased yields. The widespread use of harmful agrochemicals has also been reported, with herbicides such as Glyphosate, which is banned in the EU, being approved for use in Kenya (Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 2023).

There has also been a focus on increased livestock production. For example, Kenya signed a deal to export 700,000 cows to Indonesia annually (Otieno, 2023). In the energy sector, mitigation efforts in the updated NDC include an increase of renewables in the electricity generation mix of the national grid, and the enhancement of energy and resource efficiency across the different sectors.

While Kenya has an abundant supply of renewable energy resources, including geothermal, solar, wind and hydro, it also has significant oil reserves and 400 million tonnes of coal reserves. Coal production has relatively low costs, and prospecting of coal production has occurred in Lamu, Kitui and Kilifi counties. Coal production has been contested due to its negative environmental impact and adverse effects on livelihoods. Additionally, the government's planned nuclear power generation has raised concerns, particularly around waste management. In infrastructure, the updated NDC prioritised adaptation programmes aim to green 14,000 hectares of infrastructure, enhance the climate-proofing of energy infrastructure along the renewable energy supply chain, and upscale the construction of

roads to systematically harvest water and reduce flooding (Ministry of Environment and Forestry, 2020).

Long-term planning is the fourth component captured in the duration of the NDC, which covers a 10-year period from 2020 to 2030. A longer development time span is, however, necessary at a country, regional, and global levels as some activities, such as infrastructural projects, can take a longer duration. The diversion of resources from long-term planning can also occur due to climate change-related disasters, such as floods, and incidents like communal conflicts over resources, thereby detracting from the attainment of the NDC.

Transparency and accountability comprise the fifth component, and the updated NDC states that the process was structured for transparent communication. The use of an integrated Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) system, which is linked to existing monitoring and reporting systems, including the National Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation System (NIMES) and the County Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation System (CIMES), is an example of this. The Integrated MRV system is embedded in the Climate Change Act, which obligates all state and non-state actors to report activities on an annual basis.

The tracking of financial support required and received for climate action by all climate change actors, both state and non-state, is done by the National Treasury. While climate action may be reported using mechanisms that adhere to transparency and accountability requirements, activities that negatively impact climate change are not reported using similar mechanisms, and these can undermine climate change gains.

Cross-sector analysis is the sixth and final component. This is demonstrated in the implementation of the NDC, through the NCCAP. The NCCAP mainstreams climate change action in sectoral development plans and the CIDPs. At the sectoral level, state departments have a legal obligation to establish Climate Change Units (CCUs) to integrate NCCAP actions into their strategies and implementation plans. A County Executive Committee member coordinates climate change at the county level through a CCU. Key sectors are climate-sensitive and include agriculture, water, energy, tourism, wildlife, and health. Climate action is implemented across various sectors at the national and county government levels. Counties and various sectors are to downscale and contextualise climate change action indicators in the county and sector planning documents.

Several implementation gaps in climate change adaptation are highlighted in the updated NDC, and proposed activities to bridge these gaps are articulated. These activities include: enhancing the adaptive capacity and climate resilience across all sectors of the economy and at both the national and county government levels; enhancing uptake of adaptation technology, especially of women, youth and other vulnerable groups, incorporating scientific and indigenous knowledge; and conducting a vulnerability and risk assessment of different climate risks on human health. The Green Analytical Framework, as presented in Table 1, allows for a comprehensive analysis of implementation gaps in policy and enables an identification of possible challenges in bridging these gaps.

In the energy sector, for example, climate-related challenges may include reduced hydroelectric power supply due to decreased water supply from melting Mt. Kenya glaciers and variable rainfall patterns. In the agricultural and livestock sector, climate-related

challenges include land degradation and increased incidences of pests and diseases, which may lead to the use of banned pesticides. Vulnerability of livelihoods is then reflected in practices such as early marriage in some pastoral communities.

In the health sector, climate-related health challenges include waterborne diseases due to floods, developmental challenges in children due to a lack of proper nutrition, and mental health challenges caused by climate-related conflict and displacement.

## **Sudan and the Climate Action Agenda**

Sudan has a population of approximately 50 million people as of 2024. It occupies 1,886,068 square kilometres (728,215 square miles), making it Africa's third-largest country by area and the third-largest in the Arab League (World Population Review, 2023; Worldometer, 2025). Prior to the secession of South Sudan in 2011, the then-unified Sudan was the largest African country, with an area representing more than eight per cent of the African continent and almost two percent of the world's total land area (Sudan Population, 2021; CIA, 2023). Since Sudan's independence from joint British-Egyptian rule in 1956, a military junta supporting an Islamist-centric government has dominated the country's politics. President Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir's 30-year rule ended after months of nationwide protests (The World Factbook, 2018).

The country has varied climatic zones, with agriculture mostly dependent on rainfall. The northern and central parts experience a loss of vegetation, leaving them vulnerable to droughts (UNEP, 2007; FAO, 2005). In 2022, Sudan experienced economic growth driven by agriculture and mining (AfDB, 2022).

Sudan is severely exposed to climate change. As one of the world's least developed countries, extreme weather, recurrent floods and droughts, and changing precipitation interact with other vulnerabilities, such as ecosystem degradation, unsustainable agricultural practices, natural resource scarcities and resource-based conflicts, limiting societal capacities to cope and adapt.

Armed conflict in Sudan has had adverse effects on the population, which led to displacement, creating regional spillovers with devastating impact on the country's economic performance. In 2023, the GDP contracted by 37.5 per cent due to the destruction of production capacity, and the disruption of economic activities and rising debts. Poverty was extremely high in 2022 at 66.1 per cent and is projected to increase due to conflict (AfDB, 2024). Youth unemployment was at 40 per cent in 2022, raising unemployment rates to 20.6 per cent. Due to the conflict, GDP is projected to contract by another 5.9 per cent in 2024. Between 2010 and 2022, the share of employment in agriculture declined from 49.7 per cent to 40 per cent, while that of services increased from 41.8 per cent to 45 per cent, and that of industry remained stable at 15 per cent (AfDB, 2024).

## **Climate-Related Challenges**

Sudan is endowed with natural resources such as oil, forests, and agricultural lands. Sudan's protracted history of conflict, combined with intensive utilisation of natural resources,

has created a range of critical environmental challenges. These include widespread desertification, deforestation, loss of biodiversity, water scarcity, tribal and ethnic conflicts, and poverty. Other challenges include inadequate supplies of potable water, wildlife populations threatened by excessive hunting, soil erosion, and periodic drought (Mey and Tomlinson, 2013).

Together with environmental degradation and a growing population, climate change is contributing to the shrinking of the natural resource base, which underpins the livelihoods of farmers and pastoralists in the region, driving increased competition over land and water. Farmers, who depend on reliable and predictable weather patterns, are less productive than in previous years (UNEP-EU, 2022). National agricultural policies have favoured capital-intensive, large-scale farming, which has sidelined traditional farming techniques and focused on exporting raw materials, degrading land across agricultural areas of Sudan (Elnur, 2008).

Pastoralists have, in the recent past, experienced reliable water sources and fertile grazing areas drying up in some areas, while insecurity has made other areas inaccessible. To compensate for faltering livelihoods, fertile land and available water sources are highly sought after. Conflicts between farmers and herders tend to occur when animals encroach into fields and damage crops, or when crops are cultivated on migratory routes or animal grazing land (UNEP-EU, 2022).

## **National Climate Policy and Regulatory Framework**

The Republic of Sudan submitted an update to its first NDC as required under the Paris Agreement in 2021, thereby meeting its obligation under Article 4.9, after ratifying the Paris Agreement in 2016 (Republic of Sudan, 2021). This ratification was particularly important, as Sudan has been significantly impacted by climate change, with rapid change and degradation of the natural environment.

The country's natural environment has rapidly changed and degraded. UNEP and other international actors are engaged in interventions to reduce the impacts of climate change and increase the resilience of livelihoods in Sudan. Examples include the UK-funded 'Adapt for environment and climate resilience' (ADAPT!) project, and various government support engagements by UNEP (UNFCCC-NDC, 2022). Sudan's NDC outlines commitments and actions to reduce GHG emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change. The country's NDC includes unconditional and conditional indicators, where unconditional targets are tasks that Sudan promises to fulfil regardless of external support. In contrast, conditional targets are contingent on receiving financial and technical support from developed countries.

The country's National Adaptation Plan (NAP) outlined the need for new partnerships ranging from governments to international donors, households to the private sector, and from one end of the national institutional spectrum to the other. The passing of the Miscellaneous Amendments Law (MAL) in 2020 is an important milestone for strengthening institutional coordination to meet climate change and other pressing environmental challenges (Sudan's Climate Change Strategy, 2019; Sudan's National Adaptation Plan, 2020; Sudan's National Climate Policy and Regulatory Framework, 2020).

Sudan has set a target in its NDC to reduce GHG emissions by seven per cent below BAU levels by 2030. These reduction target depends on adequate support from the international community. Sudan also aims to increase the share of renewable energy in power generation to 20 per cent by 2030. To achieve these goals, Sudan has established several mitigation measures in the NDC. These include encouraging renewable energy sources such as solar and wind, improving energy efficiency across various sectors, enhancing sustainable land management practices, and reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. In addition to mitigation efforts, Sudan's NDC emphasises the importance of adapting to the impacts of climate change. These goals are unlikely to be realised due to ongoing conflict that has had serious ramifications not only on the humanitarian front but also the environment. The ongoing conflict is exacerbating the environmental challenges discussed above.

The country faces many challenges related to water scarcity, desertification, and the increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events. Sudan's NDC highlights the need to strengthen adaptive capacity, improve early warning systems, strengthen climate-resilient agriculture, and promote sustainable water management (Sudan's Climate Change Strategy, 2019; Sudan's National Adaptation Plan, 2020; Sudan's National Climate Policy and Regulatory Framework, 2020).

## **Sudan's Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

Sudan's GHGs originate from different sources, including agriculture, energy, industry, and waste management. The country's emissions have been increasing over the past few decades, but there have been efforts to reduce them. Total GHG emissions in Kt of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent (KtCO<sub>2</sub>eq) is composed of CO<sub>2</sub> totals excluding short-cycle biomass burning (such as agricultural waste burning and Savannah burning) but including other biomass burning (such as forest fires, post-burn decay, peat fires and decay of drained peatlands). This total encompasses all anthropogenic sources of methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O), and fluorinated gases (F-gases), including hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), perfluorocarbons (PFCs), and sulfur hexafluoride (SF<sub>6</sub>).

Over the last several years, fluctuations in Sudan's GHG emissions have been influenced by a combination of economic, political, and environmental factors. A slight decline in emissions in 2017 (–0.3 per cent) may be linked to ongoing economic challenges following the 2011 secession of South Sudan, which significantly reduced Sudan's oil revenues and industrial output (World Bank, 2020; Elnaiem, 2020). Modest increases in 2018 (0.89 per cent) and 2019 (0.3 per cent) likely correspond to gradual economic recovery and rising energy consumption, especially in urban centres (International Energy Agency [IEA], 2021). Conversely, the minor decline in 2020 (–0.06 per cent) can be attributed to the global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted transportation, reduced industrial activity, and lowered overall energy demand (UNEP and UNEP-CCC, 2021).

Additionally, Sudan's dependence on biomass for household energy and its vulnerability to climate variability, such as droughts and changes in Nile River water levels, also affect emissions from the agriculture and energy sectors (FAO, 2020). Political instability and transitional governance during this period may have further influenced infrastructure development and energy policy implementation, indirectly contributing to emission variations. To address these issues, Sudan needs to continue implementing sustainable

practices and technologies such as renewable energy and sustainable agriculture and promote education and awareness about the importance of climate change mitigation and adaptation.

### Nationally Determined Contributions

Sudan made commitments to reduce GHG emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change through its NDCs. This is a key component of the Paris Agreement, which aims to limit global warming to below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. These contributions are based on the circumstances, priorities, and capabilities of the country.

Sudan aims to reduce its GHG emissions by seven per cent by the year 2030, but the target can be increased to up to 35 per cent with international support (UNFCCC, 2021). To achieve this, Sudan plans to increase the share of renewable energy in its electricity generation mix. In this context, it plans to expand its solar and wind power capacity and promote the use of biomass for cooking and heating purposes. Since the country has significant solar and wind resources, these can be harnessed for clean energy production (UNFCCC, 2021).

As a country, it recognises the importance of improving its energy efficiency across various sectors. Its NDC emphasises the need for energy-efficient technologies and practices, especially in buildings, industry, transportation, and agriculture. Sudan can therefore significantly reduce its overall energy consumption associated with GHG emissions by adopting energy-efficient measures (Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Physical Development (Sudan), 2018). For Sudan, forests play an important part in mitigating climate change. It recognises the role they play in absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. It, therefore, aims to encourage and enhance forest conservation efforts, promote sustainable forest management practices, and increase forest cover by encouraging afforestation. These measures will contribute to emission reduction and help preserve biodiversity.

The NDC also highlights the adaptation strategies that will help address the impacts of climate change. The adaptation efforts focus on water resource management, agriculture and food security, and ecosystem-based adaptation. The implementation of these contributions requires financial resources, technology transfers, capacity-building support, and international cooperation, which is already happening (UNFCCC, 2021; Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Physical Development (Sudan), 2018).

**Table 2: Sudan Implementation Analysis-Green Theory Analytical Framework**

Principle		Implementation Analysis
i.	Environmental Sustainability	Agriculture: rain fed production Energy: oil, depended on South Sudan Forestry: available and mostly untouched
ii.	Social Equity	Agriculture: nomads Energy: wood, oil Gender, youth, and vulnerable groups: Riziegat – Mahadia, Maharia, and Mahami

	Principle	Implementation Analysis
iii.	Sustainable Economics	Agriculture: synthetic fertilizer and pesticides, desertification Energy: mining
iv.	Long-Term Planning	The NDC is for the period 2021-2030
v.	Transparency & Accountability	Transparency: reporting mechanisms Accountability: verified, ownership, responsibility
vi.	Cross-Sector Analysis	Case: forests, Blue and White Nile Sectors: energy, agriculture, education, health

Source: Analysis based on the principles of the Green Theory

From the table above, the green politics theory emphasises the interconnectedness of the ecological systems, the importance of sustainability, and the need for collective action to address the environmental challenges. The table above provides insight into the country’s efforts to mitigate climate changes, promote sustainable development, and protect its natural resources. Sudan is keen on its ecosystem, biodiversity, and natural resources. It is focused on protecting its natural resources like wildlife, forestry, and water resources. It also promotes sustainable agriculture practices, enhances environmental governance, prioritises the well-being of the people from different backgrounds and vulnerable communities, youth and women and works on practices that reduce energy consumption and GHG emissions.

It also focuses on addressing potential social disparities from climate policies. Since agriculture is mostly rain-fed, the northern and central parts experience loss of vegetation, leaving them vulnerable to droughts (FAO, 2005; UNEP, 2007). A significant portion of its forests was lost to South Sudan, but it still has a range of forest land. It is also rich in oil, but most of it is in South Sudan. They, therefore, depend on each other economically for the petroleum revenue. Extensive petroleum exploration began in the mid-1970s, and exports in 1999. In 2011, Sudan and South Sudan collectively produced approximately 425,000 barrels per day. As of 2010, Sudan was Africa’s fifth-largest oil producer and third-largest oil exporter. Its gas reserves are produced as a by-product of oil (Yager, 2012). However, by 2023, Sudan’s oil production had decreased to around 68,000 barrels per day, reflecting a substantial reduction over the past decade (TheGlobalEconomy.com, 2023).

In Sudan, gender equity has been a significant issue because of the traditional gender roles and societal expectations. Women face discrimination in different issues. However, there have been efforts to address these disparities. The Sudan government has implemented policies aimed at gender equality and empowering women. Non-governmental organisations together with international agencies, have initiated projects that focus on the Mahadia, Maharia, and Mahami communities, taking into account their cultural differences and practices. The youth have also been involved in these initiatives, with a focus on select communities.

The significant water resources, the Blue Nile, which flows into Sudan from Ethiopia, and the White Nile, which originates from Uganda through South Sudan, join in Khartoum to

form the Nile River. Education and health both face significant infrastructure, resources, and political instability problems. Sudan is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country, and most conflicts are caused by divisions along these lines, as well as the constant competition for resources. Sudan has a long history of ongoing conflicts. The change of leadership in 1993 contributed to political instability, civil wars, and various internal conflicts (Johnson 2021; Cohen 2019). Today, Sudan remains embroiled in a devastating civil war between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which began in April 2023. The conflict has resulted in over 24,000 deaths, displaced nearly 13 million people, and precipitated a severe humanitarian crisis marked by famine, mass atrocities, and widespread destruction (Refugees International, 2025). An interplay of issues fuels violence in Sudan at different times, but ideally, the political instability issues fuel competition for resources because of the pressure on natural resources as a result of climate change and desertification. The history of conflict and poor governance has also led to competition among farmers and herders (Foong et al., 2020; Verhoeven, 2011).

Former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, along with scholars such as Leroy (2009), acknowledges the contribution of the ecological crises to the Darfur conflict (Ki-Moon 2007). Yassin (2022) finds that droughts are a major challenge, leading to resource-based conflicts. The UNEP (2007) assessment also finds that conflicts in Sudan are driven by climate change and environmental degradation. This leads to the continual experience of conflicts in Sudan caused by climate change, which also has an adverse impact on infrastructure. This puts a strain on the policy implementation processes, despite funding and support.

Additionally, girls face gender disparities, often having less access to education compared to boys. The healthcare system suffers from underfunding and a shortage of medical professionals. While efforts have been made to improve healthcare and education in Sudan through sustained investments and reforms, numerous challenges exist due to conflict and ecological crises. Desertification is a major problem in Sudan, and there are also concerns pertaining to soil erosion. Limited institutional capacity, access to finances, public awareness and a lack of political will further exacerbate these challenges.

The green politics theory emphasises the importance of sustainable policies that ensure social and economic equity. These include a transition to renewable energy sources, emphasis on conservation of biodiversity, transparency and accountability of environmental governance, international cooperation, and environmental justice. As analysed in Table 2, Sudan faces challenges in adherence to the six principles articulated in the green analytical framework.

## **Gaps in Implementation**

Sudan faces several significant challenges in implementing the set of goals and targets geared toward reducing its GHG emissions. Sudan is highly vulnerable to the negative effects of climate change since its population primarily depends on climate-sensitive natural resources for their livelihoods. Lack of financial resources is a major challenge, as significant investments are required to develop its infrastructure and technology, to transition to a low-carbon economy. Institutional capacity is another challenge, as certain institutions need to be strengthened to ensure the effective implementation of the NDCs. Data on GHG emissions are also difficult to collect. This poses a challenge as data and

information are key in assessing climate change impacts and other sustainable development indicators (United Nations Development Programme, 2018; Government of Sudan, 2016; World Bank, 2019).

Sudan's political and social instability in recent years has also hindered the country's ability to focus on long-term planning and the implementation of its NDCs. The ongoing conflict has affected livelihoods, making it difficult to adapt to the impacts of climate change. To address these challenges, Sudan needs to prioritise the development of a comprehensive national climate change strategy that will align with the NDCs. This will enable the development of a clear roadmap with milestones, timelines, planning and mobilising of financial resources (United Nations Development Programme, 2018; Government of Sudan, 2016; World Bank, 2019).

In the context of energy generation and use, Sudan has the potential to increase the use of clean and carbon-neutral energy, including increasing solar and wind energy, due to its favourable climatic conditions. This would also increase the supply of electricity and enhance production. In addition to reducing deforestation through alternative sources of energy, efforts geared towards reforestation and afforestation would include planting of trees, to leverage traditional knowledge, and supporting community-based adaptation to improve climate resilience in agriculture. In the context of conflicts, a major recommendation is the mainstreaming of climate change concerns in all sectors. This will be facilitated by providing decision makers with relevant data and information to develop early warning systems and inform appropriate responses to climatic events.

## Conclusion

The policy-implementation gap occurs for various reasons, including a lack of resources, lack of political will, conflicting interests within various groups in the country, and development priorities that undermine certain policies. In the case of climate policies focused on natural resource use, environmental protection considerations may be undermined by a one-dimensional focus on profitability or by societal demands from communities that depend on the natural resource for their livelihood. These dynamics at a national level are rendered more complex when regional policy cohesion comes into play.

Climate action towards the NDCs is based on CBDR and respective capabilities. Developing countries acknowledge that meeting the obligations detailed in the NDCs is dependent on the support received in terms of finance, technology and capacity-building (Federal republic of Somalia, 2021; Ministry of Environment and Forestry, 2020). The implementation challenges detailed in the climate action case studies discussed above present a compelling case for joint action toward achieving the NDCs.

The challenges of technical capability and financing mechanisms can be addressed more effectively within the context of joint action. Shared natural resources, including renewable energy sources, can be harnessed for energy production that would be distributed in member countries. Water and air pollution cannot be compartmentalised at a national or even regional level. Banned pesticides used in one country would have an impact beyond its borders through trade of agricultural products or through water and airways. The increasing climate-related conflict and displacement also make climate change a

transboundary issue that requires joint action. Finally, climate finance for international projects would be accessible through joint applications for common activities. This would avoid duplication of efforts and the inefficient use of resources. Technology sharing and transfers save on resources and are cost-efficient through increased uptake among a larger number of people.

This chapter, therefore, posits that while policy cohesion towards climate action within countries remains problematic, policy harmonisation between countries has the potential for effective climate action. The Green theory questions the role of the state as the central actor in addressing ecological crises and views decentralised forms of government as having enhanced capacity for transparency and effective responses. Sudan and Kenya both have decentralised forms of government, with Sudan having 18 states, while Kenya has 47 counties. This poses both complexities as well as opportunities. Within the green analytical framework, the six principles can form the basis of further analysis to bridge the policy-implementation gap in fulfilling the NDCs and adhering to the Paris Agreement.

## References

African Development Bank (AfDB). (2022). *Republic of Sudan*. Available at: <https://www.afdb.org/en/countries/east-africa/sudan>.

African Development Bank (AfDB). (2024). African Economic Outlook: Diving Africa's Transformation. Available at: [https://www.afdb.org/sites/default/files/2024/06/06/aeo\\_2024\\_-\\_country\\_notes.pdf](https://www.afdb.org/sites/default/files/2024/06/06/aeo_2024_-_country_notes.pdf).

African Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) Hub. (N.d.). *Home*. Available at: <https://africandchub.org/>.

Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). (2023). *The World Factbook. Sudan*. Available at: <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/sudan/>. Archived from the original on 26 December 2018 (visited on 28 September 2023).

Cohen, H.J. (2019). *The Roots of Sudan's Upheaval*. Council on Foreign Relations, 9 May. Available at: <https://www.cfr.org/blog/roots-sudans-upheaval>.

COMESA. (n.d.). *What is COMESA*. Available at: <https://www.comesa.int/what-is-comesa/>.

Dyer, H. (2018). *Introducing Green Theory in International Relations*. E-International Relations, 7 January. Available at: <https://www.e-ir.info/2018/01/07/green-theory-in-international-relations/>.

Elnaiem, A. (2020). *Sudan's economic crisis and the legacy of conflict*. African Arguments. <https://africanarguments.org/2020/07/sudans-economic-crisis-and-the-legacy-of-conflict/> (visited 23 April 2025).

Elnur, I. (2008). *Contested Sudan: The Political Economy of War and Reconstruction*. New York: Routledge.

Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). (2005). AQUASTAT – FAO Global Information System on Water and Agriculture: Country Profile - Sudan. Available at: <https://www.fao.org/aquastat/en/countries-and-basins/country-profiles/country/SDN> (visited 28 September 2023).

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). (2020). *FAO in Sudan*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/sudan> (visited 23 April 2025).

Food and Agriculture Organization (2025). *FAO in Kenya*. Retrieved from: <https://www.fao.org/kenya/fao-in-kenya/kenya-at-a-glance/en/>.

Foong, A. Pohl, B., Rüttinger, L. (2020). *Climate-Fragility Risk Brief: Sudan*. Climate Diplomacy, 23 November. Available at: <https://climate-diplomacy.org/magazine/conflict/climate-fragility-risk-brief-sudan#:~:text=in%20the%20country.,Three%20ways%20in%20which%20climate%20change%20interacts%20with%20and%20contributes,degradation%20and%20a%20growing%20population>.

Government of Sudan. (2016). *Sudan's Nationally Determined Contribution under the Paris Agreement*. The Sudanese Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources, and Physical Planning.

Güinar, A. (2021). Green Theory in IR. A Theory for a Green World. In: Özekin, M.K and Sune, E. (Eds.), *Critical Approaches to International Relations*. pp.240-265. E-Book. Retrieved from: <https://brill.com/display/title/60889>.

Heinrich Böll Stiftung. (2023). *Toxic business: Highly hazardous pesticides in Kenya*. Available at: [https://ke.boell.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/data-and-facts\\_highly-hazardous-pesticides-in-kenya-1.pdf](https://ke.boell.org/sites/default/files/2023-09/data-and-facts_highly-hazardous-pesticides-in-kenya-1.pdf).

Hoekman, B. and Kostecki, M. (2009). *The Political Economy of the World Trading System: The WTO and Beyond*. Oxford University Press.

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). (2014). *Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. Core Writing Team, R.K. Pachauri and L.A. Meyer (eds.). Geneva: IPCC.

International Energy Agency (IEA). (2021). *Energy system of Sudan*. Available at: <https://www.iea.org/countries/sudan> (visited on 23 April 2025).

International Trade Administration (ITA). (2024). *Kenya – Energy and Electrical Power Systems*. Available at: <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/kenya-energy-electrical-power-systems>.

Johnson, D. E. (2021). *Revolution, Peace, and Justice in Sudan*. University of Pennsylvania. *Journal of International Law*. Vol 43(1), pp.187-240/

Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS). (2019). *2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census*. Available at: <https://www.knbs.or.ke/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/2019-Kenya-population-and-Housing-Census-Volume-1-Population-By-County-And-Sub-County.pdf>.

Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS). (2025). *Kenya National Bureau of Statistics*. Available at: <https://www.knbs.or.ke/>.

Kenya Red Cross. (2024). *Flood Impacts and Interventions, 2024*. Available at: <https://www.redcross.or.ke/floods/>.

Ki-Moon, B. (2007). *A Climate Culprit in Darfur*. United Nations. Available at: <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/articles/2007-06-16/climate-culprit-darfur>.

Leroy, M. (2009). *Environment and Conflict in Africa: Reflections on Darfur*. University for Peace, Africa Programme. <https://books.google.de/books?id=hnggygAACAAJ>.

Mey, J. and Tomlinson, W. (2013). *Sudan's Environmental Issues*. [https://ics.uci.edu/~wmt/courses/ICS5\\_W13/Sudan.html](https://ics.uci.edu/~wmt/courses/ICS5_W13/Sudan.html).

Ministry of Environment and Forestry. (2020). *Submission of Kenya's Updated Nationally Determined Contribution*. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Available at: <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/NDC/2022-06/Kenya%27s%20First%20%20NDC%20%28updated%20version%29.pdf>.

Muteti, S.M. (2024). *Managing the Dangerous Drift in Livestock Rustling and Banditry in Kenya*. National Crime Research Centre. Available at: [https://www.crimeresearch.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/National-Crime-Report-Managing-the-Dangerous-Drift-in-Livestock-Rustling-and-Banditry-in-Kenya\\_compressed.pdf](https://www.crimeresearch.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/National-Crime-Report-Managing-the-Dangerous-Drift-in-Livestock-Rustling-and-Banditry-in-Kenya_compressed.pdf).

Namwaya, O. (2019). *Tribunal Stops Kenya's Coal Plant Plans*. Human Rights Watch Dispatch 1 July. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/07/01/tribunal-stops-kenyas-coal-plant-plans#:~:text=On%20June%2026%2C%20the%20National%20Environmental%20Tribunal,was%20prepared%20without%20public%20consultation%20or%20participation>.

Otieno, B. (2023). *Deal Opens Window for 700,000 Cow Exports to Indonesia Yearly*. Business Daily, 10 May. Available at: <https://www.businessdailyafrica.com/bd/economy/deal-opens-window-for-700-000-cow-exports-to-indonesia--4230118>.

Refugees International. (2025). *Situation Update: Sudan – April 2025*. U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, 8 April. Available at: <https://refugees.org/situation-update-sudan-april-2025/> (visited on 23 April 2025).

Republic of Sudan. (2021). *First Nationally Determined Contribution under the Paris Agreement*. Updated October 2021. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Available at: <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/NDC/2022-10/Sudan%20Updated%20First%20NDC-12102021.pdf>.

Ritchie, H., Roser, M. and Rosado, P. (2024a). *Kenya: CO2 Country Profile*. Our World in Data. Available at: <https://ourworldindata.org/co2/country/kenya>.

Ritchie, H., Roser, M. and Rosado, P. (2024b). *Sudan: CO2 Country Profile*. Our World in Data. Available at: <https://ourworldindata.org/co2/country/sudan>.

Sasu, D.D. (2024). *Production-based carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions in Africa in 2021, by country*. Statista, 30 June. Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1268395/production-based-co2-emissions-in-africa-by-country/>.

Sudan's Climate Change Strategy. (2019). Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Physical Infrastructure, Government of Sudan.

Sudan's National Adaptation Plan. (2020). Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Physical Infrastructure, Government of Sudan.

Sudan's National Climate Policy and Regulatory Framework. (2020). Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Physical Infrastructure, Government of Sudan.

SudanPopulation2021. *WorldPopulationReview*. Available at: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/sudan> (visited on 28 September 2023).

TheGlobalEconomy.com. (2023). *Sudan: Oil production, thousand barrels per day*. Available at: [https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Sudan/oil\\_production/](https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Sudan/oil_production/) (visited on 23 April 2025).

Tosun, J., and Lang, A. (2017). *Policy Integration: Mapping the Different Concepts*. *Policy Studies*, 38 (6), 553-570. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01442872.2017.1339239>.

United Nations. (1992). *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*.

United Nations. (2015). *Paris Agreement. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*. Available at: [https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english\\_paris\\_agreement.pdf](https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf).

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2018). *Climate Change in Sudan: A Review of the Current Status and Future Projections*.

United Nations Environmental Programme. (2007). *Sudan: Post-Conflict Environmental Assessment*. Available at: [https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/ncsa-documents/UNEP\\_Sudan\\_1\\_89\\_0.pdf](https://www.thegef.org/sites/default/files/ncsa-documents/UNEP_Sudan_1_89_0.pdf) (visited on 20 September 2023).

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and European Union (EU). (2022). *EU-UNEP Climate Change and Security Project: Building Resilience to Climate-related Security Risks in North Darfur, Sudan*.

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and UNEP Copenhagen Climate Centre (UNEP-CCC). (2021). *Emissions Gap Report 2021*. 26 October. Available at: <https://www.unep.org/resources/emissions-gap-report-2021> (visited on 23 April 2025).

Verhoeven, H. (2011). *Climate change, conflict and development in Sudan: global neo-Malthusian narratives and local power struggles*. *Development and change* 42(3): 679-707.

World Bank. (2019). *Climate Change and Development in Sudan: A Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Strategies*.

World Bank. (2020). *World development indicators: Sudan*. Available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/country/sudan> (visited On 23 April 2025).

Worldometer. (2025). *Sudan population (Live)*. Available at: <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/sudan-population/> (visited on 23 April 2025).

World Population Review. (2023). *Sudan Population 2023*. Available at: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/sudan-population>

Yassin, L. (2022). *Climate Change and Political Instability: Will Sudan Ever Find a Way Out?* *The Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy*, 7 September. Available at: <https://timep.org/2022/09/07/climate-change-and-political-instability-will-sudan-ever-find-a-way-out/>.

# Chapter Five

## Implementing Chapter Six of the COMESA Treaty for Enhanced Trade Cooperation: A Case Study of Kenya

Adelaide Musanga Muchesia and Rachel Ameso Amolo

### Abstract

Chapter six of the COMESA Treaty establishes the legal and institutional framework for trade cooperation among member states, with a focus on harmonising trade policies, eliminating barriers, and fostering regional integration. This chapter critically examines Kenya's implementation of these commitments, given its strategic position and economic influence within the regional bloc. It explores how Kenya has integrated Chapter Six into its national trade framework, focusing on tariff alignment, customs procedures, and regulatory harmonisation while also unpacking the institutional and infrastructural constraints that continue to undermine the full realisation of the Treaty's objectives. Drawing from Kenya's experience, the study offers grounded insights into the challenges of implementing regional trade commitments. It proposes actionable recommendations to strengthen compliance both within Kenya and across the COMESA region. The study employs a qualitative methodology, drawing on data published by the COMESA, scholarly books authored by distinguished experts, peer-reviewed journal articles, and legal and policy documents.

**Keywords:** COMESA Treaty, COMESA Region, Implementation, Trade Cooperation, Trade Commitments

### Introduction

Regional integration in Africa is widely recognised as a pathway to economic transformation, offering opportunities to expand trade, industrialise, and build resilience in the face of global shocks. Its success, however, depends heavily on enabling conditions such as sustained political will, coherent policy harmonisation, adequate administrative capacity, and well-developed infrastructure (Hartzenberg, 2011). Without these foundational elements, integration remains a theoretical ideal rather than a practical reality. Importantly, regional integration is not a one-time event but an evolving process that both demands and reinforces structural reforms. It requires deliberate planning, phased implementation, and the creation of strong institutions to manage complexity and ensure continuity. As such, any meaningful attempt to deepen integration in Africa must be underpinned by a clear sequencing of reforms and a commitment to building the institutional groundwork necessary to sustain long-term progress (De Melo and Tsikata, 2014).

In this context, and in light of Africa's shifting economic and geopolitical landscape, there is growing recognition of the need to understand and strengthen regional trade

cooperation within frameworks such as the COMESA. As one of the continent's promising regional blocs, COMESA holds the potential to catalyse inclusive economic growth, stability, and development (Rojid, 2006). Effective regional integration under COMESA can improve trade relations, enhance investment flows, and promote the efficient movement of goods, services, and people across borders. These dynamics collectively position COMESA as a strategic platform for deepening Africa's economic resilience and global competitiveness.

COMESA began as the Preferential Trade Area (PTA) for eastern and southern Africa in 1981 under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity's Lagos Plan of Action and the Final Act of Lagos (Tumwebaze and Ijjo, 2015). Its creation aimed to harness the benefits of a larger integrated market, promote cooperation grounded in shared history and regional solidarity, and accelerate socio-economic development. In 1994, the PTA was formally transformed into the COMESA, marking a transition towards a more comprehensive and structured model of regional integration. Today, COMESA is recognised as one of the African Union's eight Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and comprises 21 member states. Its core objectives include reducing trade barriers, harmonising economic policies, and facilitating free movement of goods, services, capital, and people across the region (Khandelwal, 2004).

Chapter Six of the COMESA Treaty sets out the framework for trade cooperation, calling for the elimination of non-tariff barriers, the harmonisation of trade policies, and the active promotion of intra-regional trade. The effective implementation of these provisions is critical for member states to unlock the full developmental benefits of regional integration. Kenya, given its strategic location, relatively developed infrastructure, and diversified economy, presents a particularly instructive case for examining the practical dynamics of implementing Chapter Six.

This study offers a focused analysis of Kenya's implementation of Chapter Six of the COMESA Treaty. It examines how the country has incorporated key trade commitments and the policy environment shaping this process. It highlights Kenya's progress, identifies persistent challenges, and reflects on the wider implications for regional trade cooperation under COMESA. The study relies on a qualitative review of existing published data, including the text of the COMESA Treaty, national policy documents, implementation reports, and relevant academic and institutional literature.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on the broader theories of regional integration, trade liberalisation, and economic cooperation frameworks that are central to understanding the objectives and practical application of Chapter Six of the COMESA Treaty. These concepts help explain how RECs, such as COMESA, are designed to foster economic ties among member states and promote long-term development through shared markets, harmonised policies, and increased trade.

One of the foundational theories in this area is Jacob Viner's Customs Union Theory, developed in the 1950s. Viner introduced the concepts of trade creation and trade diversion, which remain relevant today. Trade creation occurs when lowering trade barriers between

member states results in a shift from expensive domestic production to more affordable imports from partner countries, improving efficiency and consumer welfare. On the other hand, trade diversion happens when trade shifts away from more efficient non-member countries toward less efficient member countries because of tariff preferences. In the context of COMESA, where tariff reductions and common external trade policies are key goals, Viner's framework provides a useful lens to assess whether Kenya's engagement in regional trade has led to meaningful economic gains or simply shifted trade patterns in less productive ways (Salera, 1951).

Building on this, Béla Balassa's model of economic integration adds a more structured and forward-looking perspective. Balassa (1961) outlines five stages of regional integration: free trade area, customs union, common market, economic union, and full economic integration. Each stage requires a deeper level of policy alignment and institutional cooperation. COMESA, as a bloc, aspires to move along this trajectory, having already established a free trade area and initiated steps toward forming a customs union.

In Kenya's case, the key question is the extent to which its national trade policies have been aligned with the specific objectives outlined in Chapter Six, particularly in areas such as trade facilitation, cross-border cooperation, and regulatory harmonisation. Balassa's framework of economic integration provides a valuable lens for evaluating this alignment. It traces the progression from a free trade area to more advanced stages such as a customs union, common market, and ultimately an economic and monetary union (Baldwin and Wyplosz, 2003). This approach helps contextualise Kenya's efforts within the evolving landscape of regional integration under COMESA.

## **Implementation of Chapter Six of the COMESA Treaty in Kenya**

Chapter Six of the COMESA Treaty forms the legal backbone of the bloc's trade cooperation framework, setting out binding obligations for member states to progressively dismantle barriers to intra-regional trade. Beyond simply outlining tariff reductions, the chapter mandates the creation of legal, institutional, and procedural infrastructure necessary for a functional Free Trade Area (FTA). This includes the adoption of standardised customs procedures, harmonised product standards, and mutual recognition of trade documents, elements which are often overlooked in surface-level discussions on regional integration. The chapter also envisages a structured implementation process, guided by technical committees, periodic reviews, and coordinated dispute resolution mechanisms at the regional level.

Iringo (2005) on Kenya's implementation of Chapter Six reflects a careful balancing of its regional obligations with national strategic priorities. As a key gateway to the region via the Port of Mombasa and key transport corridors such as the Northern Corridor, Kenya stands to benefit from an integrated trade regime that increases traffic through its infrastructure, boosts re-exports, and positions it as a trade hub. This has driven the country to take early steps in liberalising trade within the bloc and adopting regional trade facilitation instruments, such as electronic cargo tracking systems and integrated border management with neighbouring states. However, Kenya's implementation of Chapter Six has not been uniform across sectors or borders. While progress has been made in some areas, such

as tariff reductions and customs modernisation, other areas, particularly non-tariff barriers, regulatory harmonisation, and coordination between national and regional agencies, have witnessed slower progress.

This section explores these dynamics in depth, focusing on how Kenya has translated Chapter Six from treaty text to trade practice. It not only evaluates policy statements but also the operational realities on the ground, including how trade moves, what bottlenecks persist, and where opportunities for deeper cooperation remain untapped.

## **Kenya and the COMESA Region**

Kenya holds a strategic and influential position within the COMESA region, both geographically and economically. As one of the most diversified and industrially developed economies in eastern and southern Africa, it serves as both a key beneficiary of regional integration and a leading force behind COMESA's trade agenda. Its well-developed transport infrastructure, including the Port of Mombasa, extensive road and rail networks, and the Northern Corridor, has positioned it as a vital logistics and commercial hub. This connectivity allows Kenya to efficiently serve not only its domestic market but also landlocked member states, such as Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, thereby reinforcing its central role in facilitating regional trade and economic integration (Ho, 2019).

Kenya's engagement in COMESA has been shaped by a combination of regional diplomacy, domestic economic objectives, and geopolitical considerations. From a policy standpoint, Kenya has actively supported the development of regional trade protocols. It has often aligned its national development plans, such as the Kenya Vision 2030 and successive Medium-Term Plans, with regional integration priorities. In doing so, Kenya has positioned itself as a core member state within COMESA. The country frequently hosts high-level summits, participating in technical working groups, and playing a leading role in regional trade negotiations (Wanyama, 2013).

In terms of trade flows, Kenya's exports to COMESA countries are largely composed of manufactured goods, including cement and processed foodstuffs. This reflects Kenya's comparative advantage in value-added production and its growing role as a regional industrial hub. Imports from COMESA, on the other hand, primarily consist of agricultural produce and raw materials, such as cereals and vegetables, which complement Kenya's industrial needs.

During the third quarter report of 2023, exports to the COMESA market reached USD 558.5 million, up from USD 454.6 million in the same period in 2022, demonstrating the increasing importance of regional markets for Kenyan exports. In contrast, imports from COMESA and other regional blocs declined to USD 173.4 million and USD 221.8 million, respectively, suggesting shifts in regional supply chains or improvements in domestic sourcing (Capmad, n.d.). This trade pattern indicates the dual significance of COMESA for Kenya: not only as a platform for market expansion, but also as a strategic mechanism for diversifying export destinations beyond traditional partners in the European Union and Asia, thereby enhancing economic resilience and regional interdependence.

## Kenya's Implementation of Chapter Six of the Treaty

Kenya, as an active member of the COMESA region, has demonstrated a formal commitment to implementing Chapter Six of the COMESA Treaty, which seeks to establish an FTA among member states. Central to this commitment is the progressive reduction and eventual elimination of both tariff and non-tariff barriers, alongside the facilitation of the free movement of goods and services across the region. In pursuit of these objectives, Kenya has undertaken several strategic measures to align its trade practices with COMESA's regional integration agenda. These steps include reforms in customs procedures, adoption of electronic trade systems, investment in border infrastructure, and policy adjustments geared toward harmonising trade regulations with regional standards.

### Tariffs and Trade Barriers Reduction and Elimination

According to COMESA (2020), Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) continue to pose significant challenges to intra-regional trade across Africa, and the COMESA region is no exception. According to data from the Tripartite Online NTB Reporting, Monitoring, and Elimination Mechanism—a joint initiative of COMESA, the East African Community (EAC), and the Southern African Development Community (SADC)—approximately 29 per cent of all reported NTBs involve trade within the COMESA bloc. A closer examination reveals that a substantial majority of these NTBs, nearly 82 per cent, stem from operational issues. These include complications related to customs procedures, delays in the issuance of permits, and challenges in the application and verification of Rules of Origin. The remaining 18 per cent are associated with restrictive national policies, regulations, or procedural inefficiencies that are more complex and often embedded within domestic legal frameworks.

While the Tripartite Mechanism has been instrumental in identifying and addressing operational NTBs, the more entrenched, policy-related barriers require sustained political will and deeper regulatory harmonisation among member states. Efforts to strengthen institutional frameworks and enhance transparency are essential to effectively eliminate these persistent obstacles to regional trade.

Chapter Six of the COMESA Treaty explicitly obligates member states to establish institutional frameworks and national-level mechanisms to systematically address such barriers. These mechanisms are expected to not only resolve existing NTBs but also preempt emerging ones through timely identification, stakeholder involvement, and policy harmonisation.

To this end, Kenya developed a comprehensive National Strategy for the Elimination of Non-Tariff Barriers (Horn of Africa Initiative, 2023). The strategy outlines targeted policy actions aimed at dismantling both technical and administrative NTBs that constrain the flow of goods and services across borders. It addresses issues such as inconsistent customs procedures, duplicative licensing and inspection regimes, delays in standards approvals, and opaque trade documentation requirements. The strategy also lays the groundwork for harmonising Kenya's domestic trade regulations with regional obligations under COMESA, as well as with broader frameworks such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and the World Trade Organization's Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA).

A significant institutional development arising from the strategy has been the strengthening of Kenya's National Monitoring Committee on NTBs. Operating under the Ministry of Investments, Trade, and Industry, this committee acts as a coordinating body for NTB identification and resolution. It brings together public and private sector stakeholders, encourages regular consultations, and channels reported complaints through COMESA's online tripartite NTB platform for timely redress. This mechanism has enhanced transparency and accountability in addressing trader grievances. It has also created a feedback loop that informs policy adjustments (Horn of Africa Initiative, 2023).

Concrete outcomes have begun to emerge. For example, clearance times at major border posts, such as Malaba and Busia, have been significantly reduced following the implementation of integrated border management systems and the adoption of pre-arrival processing protocols (KRA, 2018a). Additionally, according to Mafurutu (2020), Kenya has improved its administration of Rules of Origin through digitised platforms, enhanced customs officer training, and outreach to exporters, addressing one of the most recurrent sources of NTB-related trade delays.

### **Harmonisation of Trade Policies**

Kenya has actively engaged in the harmonisation of trade policies and regulations within COMESA, contributing to the creation of a more predictable and conducive trade environment. Beyond the adoption of the Harmonised Seed Regulations in Eastern and Southern Africa, Kenya has participated in initiatives aimed at aligning sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures, which are crucial for facilitating agricultural trade in the region (East African Community [EAC], 2017). For instance, Kenya hosted a stakeholders' workshop in April 2024 to revise COMESA's SPS regulations and develop implementation plans for food safety, plant health, and animal health technical working groups. These efforts align with the COMESA Treaty's mandate for member states to coordinate and harmonise agricultural policies and regulations to promote regional trade.

Additionally, Kenya has been involved in the harmonisation of trade facilitation measures, such as the implementation of the COMESA Carrier's License. This allows commercial goods vehicles to operate across member states with a single license, thereby reducing the cost and complexity of cross-border trade.

### **Customs and Trade Facilitation**

According to COMESA (2021), Kenya has undertaken a range of institutional and infrastructural reforms to advance customs and trade facilitation in alignment with Chapter Six of the COMESA Treaty. A central component of these efforts is Kenya's implementation of the COMESA Regional Customs Transit Guarantee Scheme (RCTG-CARNET). This is a system designed to streamline the movement of transit goods through a single customs bond applicable across multiple COMESA member states. This initiative significantly reduces border delays, lowers the cost of cross-border transport, and mitigates administrative redundancies.

To further augment the efficiency of its customs operations, the Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) has adopted the Integrated Customs Management System (iCMS), which automates

customs procedures, strengthens risk management capabilities, and improves data accuracy (KRA, 2018a).

In parallel, Kenya has operationalised One-Stop Border Posts (OSBPs) at strategic points such as Busia and Malaba, facilitating joint processing by Kenyan and Ugandan border authorities and reducing procedural duplications (KRA, 2018b). In support of compliant trade actors, Kenya has embraced the Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) programme. The programme grants recognised traders preferential treatment to expedite customs clearance, thereby fostering regulatory compliance and trust between the private sector and customs administrations (Kenya Revenue Authority [KRA], n.d.).

Kenya has also deployed the COMESA Virtual Trade Facilitation System (CVTFS). This digital platform consolidates several COMESA trade instruments, including the Yellow Card Scheme, the Regional Customs Bond Guarantee, Transit Data Transfer, and Harmonised Axle Load Limits. Utilising GPS-enabled electronic seals, the CVTFS allows real-time tracking of consignments, enhancing transparency, security, and coordination among stakeholders across the transport corridors (COMESA, n.d.).

These cumulative measures emphasise Kenya's commitment to fulfilling its obligations under the COMESA Treaty, particularly in harmonising trade procedures and fostering a more integrated and efficient regional trade framework.

## **Infrastructure Development**

In furtherance of its commitments under Chapter Six of the COMESA Treaty, Kenya has implemented a series of strategic interventions to strengthen trade facilitation at the Moyale OSBP—a critical node for cross-border trade between Kenya and Ethiopia. Operationalised in December 2020, the Moyale OSBP streamlines customs and immigration procedures by integrating the functions of both countries' border agencies within a unified facility, thereby reducing procedural redundancies and enhancing trade efficiency (EAC, 2018).

To improve the functionality of the Moyale OSBP, the Government of Kenya and the COMESA Secretariat entered into two pivotal agreements. The first delegates the implementation of Coordinated Border Management (CBM) activities at the Moyale border, while the second supports a project aimed at increasing the competitiveness and market access of Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) engaged in Kenya's fish value chain. These initiatives are funded under the European Union's Trade Facilitation Programme (TFP), which has allocated €2,349,790 million to support progressive trade integration and the elimination of border-related trade barriers (KRA, n.d.).

As part of this collaboration, the European Union provided equipment valued at KES 82.6 million to improve border infrastructure and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) capacity. These upgrades include the installation of testing facilities, medical laboratories, and public amenities, all intended to improve both regulatory enforcement and service delivery at the border. Complementing the physical infrastructure investments, capacity-building initiatives have been undertaken for border officials, focusing on the use of the electronic Single Window system, the resolution of Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs), and compliance with SPS standards (Modachi, 2024).

Moreover, Kenya and Ethiopia have jointly adopted an Operational Procedure Manual for the Moyale OSBP. This manual harmonises operational protocols and establishes uniform procedures within the common control area, thereby enabling more efficient and coordinated clearance of goods and persons (KRA, 2021).

## **Regional Integration Projects**

Kenya's implementation of Chapter Six of the COMESA Treaty is exemplified through its active participation in regional trade facilitation mechanisms, most notably the COMESA Regional Customs Transit Guarantee (RCTG) Scheme. This scheme represents a cornerstone of Kenya's efforts to promote seamless cross-border trade and deeper regional integration.

In 2022 alone, Kenya executed 1,282 Regional Customs Transit Bonds valued at approximately USD 1 billion, underscoring the scale of its commitment to facilitating transit trade within the COMESA region. The RCTG Scheme operates along the Northern and Central transport corridors, which serve as critical trade routes connecting Kenya to Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. By enabling goods to move under a single customs guarantee across multiple jurisdictions, the scheme significantly reduces transit and transport costs, estimated at between 15 per cent and 20 per cent, while improving predictability and efficiency across borders (COMESA, 2022.).

The uniformity of the system, which relies on the use of Customs Seals and standardised procedures, aligns closely with the objectives of Chapter Six, particularly in removing non-tariff barriers and promoting coordinated trade policies among member states.

As of 2022, the scheme was fully operational in five countries: Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and Tanzania, with 13 member states participating. Its expansion beyond COMESA borders to include non-member states, such as Tanzania and South Sudan, reflects the growing appeal of regionalised trade governance frameworks and Kenya's role in shaping them.

Moreover, the scheme has created a supportive ecosystem for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). By the end of 2021, it had enrolled 1,077 Clearing and Forwarding Agents and Sureties, the majority of which were SMEs, and included 51 insurance companies. Collectively, the SMEs generated over USD 833,530 in premiums. Kenya's participation in this inclusive regional framework not only reinforces its compliance with COMESA's integration goals but also stimulates private sector engagement in regional trade (COMESA, 2022).

## **Challenges to the Implementation of Chapter Six of the Treaty**

Despite the considerable strides Kenya has made in advancing trade cooperation under COMESA, its integration efforts continue to be impeded by a range of structural and institutional challenges. They include the following:

## **Regulatory Hurdles**

A key obstacle to Kenya's effective participation in COMESA's integration efforts is the ongoing regulatory misalignment among member states. Harmonising trade rules and standards remains a slow and complex process, often disrupting the implementation of COMESA's trade protocols. Like many of its regional peers, Kenya faces challenges in aligning its domestic laws and institutions with COMESA obligations, resulting in delays, inefficiencies, and uncertainty for traders.

A case in point is the implementation of the COMESA Seed Harmonisation Implementation Plan (COMSHIP), launched in 2014 to facilitate cross-border seed trade through regulatory harmonization. Despite its promise, the initiative has encountered significant obstacles. A policy brief by the African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF) identifies several factors impeding Kenya's full domestication of the COMESA Seed Trade Harmonisation Regulations. This included the absence of harmonised technical guidelines for seed certification, insufficient staffing of seed inspectors, and inadequate physical infrastructure across member states. These systemic shortcomings have not only slowed the coordination process but also limited the practical benefits of COMSHIP for Kenyan farmers and seed traders (Willy and Nang'ayo, 2019).

Further regulatory complications arise from inconsistent interpretation and application of rules of origin within the COMESA Free Trade Area. These inconsistencies introduce uncertainty for Kenyan exporters attempting to access preferential treatment under COMESA agreements, thereby weakening the incentive structure designed to promote intra-regional trade.

Additionally, the lack of mutual recognition of quality standards and certification marks among member states poses a significant barrier to trade. While the Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS) administers various quality assurance systems, such as the Standardisation Mark (S-Mark) and the Diamond Mark of Quality (D-Mark), there is limited evidence of reciprocal recognition of these marks by other COMESA national standards bodies, including the Mauritius Standards Bureau. This fragmentation in standards recognition hampers the movement of goods across borders and imposes additional compliance burdens on Kenyan exporters and importers (COMESA, 2020).

## **Infrastructure Deficiencies**

Another critical constraint to Kenya's full realisation of its commitments under Chapter Six of the COMESA Treaty is the inadequacy of its regional transport infrastructure. Although Kenya has made commendable progress in upgrading its road networks, port facilities, and railway systems, most notably through the development of the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR), significant infrastructural gaps persist, undermining the efficiency of cross-border trade and regional connectivity.

The SGR, linking Mombasa to Nairobi and later to Naivasha, represents a key trade corridor intended to facilitate the movement of goods across the East African region. However, the failure to extend this railway line beyond Naivasha towards the Ugandan border has limited its regional utility. The initial stages of the SGR were largely funded through concessional loans from the Export-Import Bank of China. Yet, mounting concerns about the project's

financial sustainability and Kenya's growing public debt have led to the suspension of further Chinese financing, effectively halting progress on the envisioned extension. This has left the railway terminating in the Rift Valley, approximately 468 kilometres short of the Uganda border, a gap that critically disrupts the intended regional linkage (Business Daily Africa, 2025).

In light of these setbacks, Kenya has turned to alternative funding sources, including engaging in discussions with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to secure investment for the continuation of the railway project. While these efforts signal Kenya's commitment to regional integration, the delays and financing uncertainties have created a logistical bottleneck, impeding the efficient movement of goods through the Northern Corridor, one of COMESA's key trade arteries (Business Daily Africa, 2025).

The implications of this incomplete infrastructure are profound. The inability to establish a continuous and efficient rail connection between Kenya and its neighbouring states undermines the Treaty's goal to remove physical barriers to trade and the promotion of interconnected regional markets. Without reliable and integrated transport infrastructure, the cost and time of moving goods remain high. This diminishes the competitiveness of Kenyan exports and eroding the potential benefits of trade liberalisation under the COMESA framework.

### **Non-Tariff Barriers**

Non-tariff barriers (NTBs) continue to plague Kenya's trade relations with other COMESA member states. These barriers, which include cumbersome customs procedures, regulatory differences, and restrictive licensing requirements, create bottlenecks at border crossings. The Nile Basin Initiative reports that numerous non-tariff trade barriers are encountered at the border points of Busia and Malaba in Uganda.

These barriers result in irregular practices when it comes to certification and the imposition of stamp fees. Traders face prolonged and cumbersome documentation procedures when applying for licenses, spending approximately seven hours waiting in queues. In contrast, in Kenya, traders spend an average of only three hours at customs offices. Furthermore, the report indicates that formal traders dealing with perishable goods and grains turn to informal channels due to the additional costs associated with increased loading and unloading expenses, which pose a significant obstacle to trade (New Vision, 2020).

### **Political Factors**

Domestic politics, electoral cycles, and regional rivalries can disrupt the continuity and consistency required for the successful implementation of trade cooperation agreements. Political shifts and tensions among member states can affect their commitment to the COMESA objectives. For example, in February 2019, Kenya and Somalia became embroiled in a diplomatic dispute with far-reaching consequences. Kenya expelled Somalia's ambassador and recalled its own from Mogadishu, citing allegations that Somalia had auctioned oil blocs in a disputed territory. This move was followed by the introduction of mandatory stopovers in Wajir for planes from Mogadishu, a clear demonstration of deteriorating relations. This shift in focus from the fight against terrorism to a border dispute

exacerbated security concerns in the region, threatening the stability required for trade cooperation agreements to flourish (The EastAfrican, 2020).

The impact of these diplomatic disputes extended beyond mere political posturing. In March 2020, Somalia banned the importation of Miraa (khat) from Kenya in response to Nairobi's decision to stop issuing visas on arrival to Somalis. This trade disruption had immediate economic repercussions, as Miraa exports were a significant source of revenue for Kenyan farmers. The ongoing standoff between Kenya and Somalia has also caused significant threats and delays to regional development projects, particularly the Lamu Port-South-Sudan-Ethiopia-Transport (LAPSSET) Corridor, which heavily depends on political stability in the region (The EastAfrican, 2020).

### **Compliance with Rules of Origin**

Compliance with rules of origin, which determines the eligibility of products for preferential treatment within COMESA, raises another challenge. Kenya had to ensure that its exports met the criteria to benefit from reduced tariffs within the bloc; failure to do so has resulted in economic losses. A case in point is Uganda's rejection of tissue paper manufactured in Kenya by Africa Cotton Industries in March 2020, as it does not allow group packaging of tissue paper, as provided for under the EAC harmonised standard (TradeBarriers.org, n.d.).

Uganda has essentially not implemented the EAC harmonised standards. Therefore, the products must conform to the Uganda National Standard. Moreover, since early May 2011, the Zambia Revenue Authority (ZRA) blocked the entry of Bidco's products into the Zambian market, alleging non-compliance with the 35 per cent value addition requirement under COMESA's Rules of Origin (tradebarriers.org, 2011).

This trade barrier persists despite earlier verification missions conducted by both Zambian and Kenyan authorities. Officials from the ZRA previously inspected Bidco's production facilities in Kenya and confirmed compliance with the value addition criteria. Furthermore, KRA conducted a fresh verification mission and submitted its findings to ZRA, reaffirming that the product met the necessary regional content requirements. To date, ZRA has not responded to the report.

As a result, the importer in Zambia was compelled to pay the Common External Tariff (CET) rate of 25 per cent, instead of enjoying the 0 per cent preferential rate applicable to goods that qualify under COMESA rules, leading to substantial financial losses. Eventually, the importer ceased importing the product altogether. Bidco continues to suffer significant losses due to the disruption of market access and erosion of its regional market share.

This case also highlights the systemic weaknesses in the enforcement and mutual recognition of trade facilitation mechanisms under Chapter Six. It underscores the absence of effective dispute resolution processes and the lack of political will among certain member states to uphold verification outcomes provided by fellow COMESA partners. For Kenya, such instances highlight the broader challenge of ensuring that its goods, even when compliant, are accorded fair treatment in the region. This situation undermines the very objectives of regional integration.

## **The COVID-19 Pandemic**

The COVID-19 pandemic had an immediate and profound impact on Kenya's ability to uphold its commitments under Chapter Six. The onset of the pandemic triggered widespread lockdowns and mobility restrictions, not only within Kenya but across the COMESA region, severely disrupting both global and regional supply chains.

One of the most significant effects was the delay in cross-border trade, particularly at key entry points such as the Busia and Malaba border posts. Heightened health screenings and inconsistent COVID-19 testing protocols between Kenya and Uganda resulted in border clearance delays that stretched for days. Truck drivers transporting essential goods, including food, pharmaceuticals, and raw materials, experienced hardships that not only increased transport costs but also caused spoilage of perishable goods (Apindi and Okuto, 2025). These delays disproportionately affected small and medium-sized traders, many of whom were compelled to use informal trade channels to bypass restrictions, undermining formal trade frameworks and the principles of transparency and harmonisation under Chapter Six.

In addition to reduced trade flows, Kenya's fiscal space was severely constrained, as the government diverted resources toward public health interventions and social safety nets. As a result, planned investments in critical trade infrastructure such as upgrades to the Northern Corridor, digitalisation of customs procedures, and implementation of trade facilitation systems were either delayed or shelved (Kiaka et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the economic shock limited Kenya's ability to participate actively in regional policy coordination and dispute resolution forums, key pillars of COMESA's institutional framework. The lack of synchronised pandemic responses among COMESA member states, such as varying lockdown durations, travel bans, and testing requirements, exposed weaknesses in regional cooperation and further complicated efforts to harmonise trade policies.

## **Implications of Implementing Chapter Six of the COMESA Treaty**

Adequate and sustained implementation of Chapter Six of the COMESA Treaty presents a transformative opportunity for Kenya's economic trajectory, particularly through the expansion of intra-regional trade. By systematically dismantling tariff barriers and streamlining trade facilitation procedures, Kenya stands to deepen its integration within the regional economy, unlocking access to a broader and more diverse market of over 500 million consumers. This access not only enables local businesses to scale operations and increase export volumes but also supports the diversification of Kenya's export base—from traditional agricultural products to value-added manufactured goods—thereby fostering economic resilience and reducing overreliance on external markets.

The economic dividends of this integration extend beyond trade volumes. As Kenyan products become more competitive within the COMESA region, preferential trade terms under Chapter Six increase the country's appeal as a destination for foreign direct investment (FDI), particularly in manufacturing, agro-processing, and logistics. Greater investment inflows stimulate industrial growth, generate employment, and contribute to

poverty alleviation. The expansion of trade-intensive sectors fuels demand for labour, offering job opportunities across formal and informal markets, particularly for youth and women, and elevating household incomes and living standards.

Moreover, Kenya's effective participation in the COMESA Free Trade Area positions it as a regional industrial and logistics hub. Infrastructure investments, such as the ongoing development of the LAPSSET Corridor, the SGR and expanded road networks, complement the objectives of Chapter Six by reducing the cost and time of cross-border trade. These projects are not only commercial enablers but also instruments of connectivity that facilitate the seamless movement of goods, services, and people, strengthening regional value chains and stimulating hinterland development.

Implementation of Chapter Six also enhances Kenya's economic resilience in the face of global volatility. By embedding itself more firmly within the regional trade architecture, Kenya reduces its exposure to external shocks such as global supply chain disruptions, commodity price fluctuations, and geopolitical uncertainties. In this context, regional markets serve as buffers, allowing Kenyan businesses to pivot toward stable, proximate demand even when global conditions are uncertain.

In addition to the economic and infrastructural implications, deeper trade integration under Chapter Six fosters regional peace and political stability. Economic interdependence among member states creates shared interests and reduces the incentive for conflict, promoting dialogue, cooperation, and collective problem-solving. A rules-based trade environment, anchored in predictable regional commitments, reinforces trust and transparency among trading partners, both essential for long-term peace and sustainable development.

## **Lessons Learnt and Best Practices: Policy Recommendations**

Kenya's experience in implementing Chapter Six of the COMESA Treaty provides a valuable reference point for assessing the practical requirements of regional trade integration. While the process has not been without its challenges, several policy interventions and institutional practices stand out as effective models that other COMESA member states could adopt. These lessons reflect the interconnected pillars of political commitment, institutional innovation, infrastructural development, and stakeholder engagement, each essential to the realisation of a functional and inclusive FTA.

A primary lesson emerging from Kenya's experience is the critical role of domestic policy aligning with regional obligations. Kenya has shown consistent political will to internalise Chapter Six commitments through national mechanisms. Notably, the development of a National Strategy for the Elimination of NTBs illustrates how targeted policy instruments can address operational bottlenecks while promoting compliance with regional trade facilitation standards.

Kenya's active participation in the COMESA RCTG-CARNET, designed to expedite the movement of goods under a single customs bond across member states, further underscores its commitment to harmonised regional trade procedures. These initiatives point to the need for coherent and well-sequenced policy reforms, supported by clear institutional mandates and accountability frameworks.

Kenya's investment in cross-border infrastructure represents another area of demonstrable impact. The operationalisation of the Moyale OSBP on the Kenya-Ethiopia frontier, implemented with support from COMESA and the European Union, has yielded tangible improvements in trade logistics and border efficiency. This intervention has not only reduced transit times and associated costs but also illustrated the importance of coordinated border management and harmonised clearance procedures. Infrastructure investments of this kind serve as enablers of trade and symbols of regional integration, reinforcing the practical benefits of COMESA's trade liberalisation agenda.

Equally significant is Kenya's commitment to public-private dialogue in shaping trade policy and ensuring participatory governance. Platforms that bring together government agencies, private sector actors, and development partners have fostered greater transparency and responsiveness in policy design. These dialogues have facilitated the identification of trade-related constraints and encouraged policy adjustments based on real-time business experiences. The implementation of the AEO programme is a noteworthy example of how Kenya has sought to promote trust-based trade facilitation by recognising compliant traders and granting them expedited processing and other preferential treatment. This model highlights the value of incentive-based regulation in building efficiency and compliance within the trading community.

Kenya has also prioritised capacity-building and technological modernisation across trade-related institutions. Through targeted training programmes for customs officials, border personnel, and regulatory authorities, Kenya has sought to enhance institutional capacity in areas such as electronic cargo tracking, risk management, and non-intrusive inspection technologies. These measures have improved the predictability of cross-border transactions while strengthening enforcement against illicit trade and fraud. The adoption of ICT-enabled systems reflects a broader recognition that digital trade tools are indispensable in modernising border procedures and achieving the goals outlined in Chapter Six.

Taken together, Kenya's experience provides a composite framework of best practices for advancing regional trade integration under COMESA. It demonstrates that successful implementation of treaty obligations is contingent upon a multi-pronged approach grounded in high-level political support, institutional adaptability, infrastructure development, and inclusive policy processes. For other member states seeking to deepen their participation in the COMESA Free Trade Area, Kenya's model offers both inspiration and instruction.

### **Strategies for Strengthening Trade Cooperation Under Chapter Six**

To fully realise the objectives of Chapter Six of the COMESA Treaty, a comprehensive set of strategies must be adopted to enhance trade cooperation and integration among member states. Foremost among these is the harmonisation of trade policies, regulatory frameworks, and technical standards, which will reduce fragmentation and facilitate smoother cross-border transactions. Sustained policy-level dialogue and intergovernmental coordination are essential for building consensus on unified trade rules and their enforcement.

Equally important is the need for targeted capacity building, particularly in resource-constrained member states. This includes training customs and trade officials, upgrading digital trade infrastructure, and supporting greater awareness of regional and international

trade commitments. Strengthening technical capabilities at the national level will ensure more consistent and effective implementation of trade protocols.

Public-private partnerships (PPPs) should be promoted to leverage private sector expertise and resources in designing and implementing trade solutions. Engaging businesses in policy formulation and regional infrastructure development, such as cross-border transport corridors and digital platforms, will enhance the relevance and sustainability of trade reforms. Financing such initiatives through international partnerships and development assistance can help close existing infrastructure gaps and reduce transaction costs.

Additionally, improving access to trade finance and establishing reliable regional payment systems is essential. The creation of a regional trade finance facility, alongside simplified and digitised customs processes, would expedite clearance times, improve transparency, and lower barriers for SMEs.

To further foster cooperation, bilateral and multilateral agreements should focus on mutual recognition of standards, simplified documentation, and efficient dispute resolution mechanisms. A centralised COMESA trade information portal could also provide market intelligence, regulatory updates, and real-time data to businesses, enabling more informed decision-making and improved compliance.

Encouraging intra-COMESA investment through incentives and inter-firm partnerships can stimulate the growth of regional value chains and promote industrialisation. Finally, a robust monitoring and evaluation system should be institutionalised to track progress, assess impact, and adjust strategies as necessary.

These strategies require a collective commitment from all member states, grounded in open communication, cooperative problem-solving, and a shared vision of regional prosperity through trade.

## **Conclusion**

This study set out to critically examine Kenya's implementation of Chapter Six of the COMESA Treaty, with a view to assessing its effectiveness in advancing regional trade cooperation. It is evident that the country has made considerable strides in aligning national trade systems with regional obligations. Kenya's experience offers a compelling case of how targeted reforms, stakeholder engagement, and infrastructural investments can collectively contribute to the broader objectives of regional integration.

The findings highlight several positive developments. Kenya has demonstrated commendable political will and institutional responsiveness in developing national strategies to eliminate non-tariff barriers, participating in regional customs schemes, and adopting digital trade facilitation tools. Its investments in cross-border infrastructure and coordinated border management reflect a commitment to reducing trade frictions and improving connectivity with neighbouring states. The promotion of public-private dialogue and the implementation of programmes, such as the AEO scheme, further illustrate Kenya's efforts to foster a conducive and inclusive trading environment.

At the same time, the study underscores the persistence of significant challenges. Issues such as inconsistent application of rules of origin, policy divergence among member states, and delays in the resolution of NTBs continue to undermine the full realisation of Chapter Six. These challenges point to the need for more robust regional enforcement mechanisms, deeper harmonisation of trade standards, and improved coordination between national and regional institutions.

Going forward, Kenya must build on its existing achievements while addressing the remaining gaps. Priorities should include scaling up institutional capacity at decentralised border points, strengthening real-time NTB monitoring and dispute resolution systems, and fostering greater coherence between COMESA, the East African Community (EAC), and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) commitments. Moreover, sustained investment in infrastructure, logistics, and ICT systems will be critical to maintaining momentum and enhancing Kenya's position as a regional trade hub.

More broadly, Kenya's experience offers important lessons for the COMESA region. It demonstrates that regional integration cannot be achieved through treaty provisions alone. It requires continuous political commitment, coordinated policy action, and inclusive governance. Other member states can draw on Kenya's best practices, adapting them to their national contexts to accelerate progress toward a truly integrated, competitive, and resilient regional economy.

## References

- Apindi, T. O. and Okuto, E. (2025). Effects of COVID-19 pandemic control measures on cross-border truck drivers mobility: A case study of Malaba border town, Kenya/Uganda. In M. O. Owiso, F. A. Tufa, & A. M. Hersi (Eds.), *Migration and displacement in the IGAD region* (pp. xx–xx). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-6611-6\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-6611-6_9).
- Balassa, B. (1961). *The Theory of Economic Integration*. Homewood, IL: Richard D. Irwin.
- COMESA. (1993).
- Baldwin, R. E. and Wyplosz, C. (2003). *Economics of European integration*. Choice Reviews Online, 41(04), 41–2283. <https://doi.org/10.5860/choice.41-2283>.
- Business Daily Africa. (2025). Kenya-Uganda SGR line closer as Treasury allocates Sh16 billion. 5 May. Available at: [https://x.com/BD\\_Africa/status/1919625674731474953](https://x.com/BD_Africa/status/1919625674731474953).
- Capmad. (n.d.). *Kenya, EAC/COMESA: Increase in exports*. Available at: <https://www.capmad.com/economy-en/kenya-eac-comesa-increase-in-exports/>.
- Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). (2021). *COMESA Regional Strategy on Elimination of Non-Tariff Barriers*. Lusaka, Zambia: COMESA Secretariat.
- Common Markets for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). (2022). *AfDB Funds COMESA to Develop the Pharmaceutical Industry in the Region*. COMESA Quarterly Newsletter, Vol. 4, October-December 2022. Lusaka: COMESA. Available at: <https://www>.

[comesa.int/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/COMESA-Quarterly-Newsletter-Vol.-4-2022\\_web.pdf](https://comesa.int/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/COMESA-Quarterly-Newsletter-Vol.-4-2022_web.pdf).

De Melo, J., and Tsikata, Y. (2014). *Regional integration in Africa: Challenges and prospects*. In Working Paper Series.

East African Community. (2017). *EAC Harmonized Standards for Sanitary Products*. Arusha, Tanzania: EAC Secretariat.

Hartzenberg, T. (2011). Regional integration in Africa. Social Science Research Network. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1941742>

Ho, M. (2019). *Kenya: The Key Economic Hub in East Africa*. HKTDC Research, 16 December. Available at: <https://research.hktdc.com/en/article/MzQ4NDcwNjc2>.

Horn of Africa Initiative (HoAI). (2023). Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) monitoring systems in Africa: Possible approaches for HoAI countries. Addis Ababa: HoAI. Available at: <https://www.hoainitiative.org/sites/default/files/uploads/NTBs-FINAL-last-11-December.pdf>.

Iringo, E. M. (2005). *Regional economic integration: the challenge of dual membership to Kenya- with special reference to EAC and COMESA*.

Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA). (2018a). *Integrated customs system: A game changer in clearance of goods*. Blog, 20 June. Available at: <https://kra.go.ke/news-center/blog/89-integrated-customs-system-a-game-changer-in-clearance-of-goods>.

Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA). (2018b). *Presidents Kenyatta, Museveni commission Busia OSBP*. News, 30 August 2018. Available at: <https://www.kra.go.ke/news-center/news/373-presidents-kenyatta%2C-museveni-commission-busia-osbp>.

Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA). (2021). *Kenya confident on trade with Ethiopia as Moyale OSBP operational manual is signed*. Press Release, 16 September. Available at: <https://www.kra.go.ke/news-center/press-release/1444-kenya-confident-on-trade-with-ethiopia-as-moyale-osbp-operational-manual-is->.

Khandelwal, P. (2004). *COMESA and SADC: Prospects and Challenges for Regional Trade Integration*. SSRN Electronic Journal.

Kiaka, R., Chikulo, S., Slootheer, S., and Hebinck, P. (2021). "The street is ours". *A comparative analysis of street trading, Covid-19 and new street geographies in Harare, Zimbabwe and Kisumu, Kenya*. Food Security, 13(5).

Mafurutu, R. (2020). *Use of electronic certificates of origin now and beyond COVID-19 in intra-African trade*. tralacBlog, 29 June. Available at: <https://www.tralac.org/blog/article/14710-use-of-electronic-certificates-of-origin-now-and-beyond-covid-19-in-intra-african-trade.html>.

Modachi, O. (2024). EU gives Kenya Sh826m equipment to boost cross-border trade. Standard Media, 9 October. Available at: <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/nairobi/article/2001504301/eu-gives-kenya-sh826m-equipment-to-boost-cross-border-trade>.

New Vision. (2020). *Kenya intervenes in Busia, Malaba border crisis*. 15 October. Available at: <https://www.newvision.co.ug/news/1529413/kenya-intervenes-busia-malaba-border-crisis>.

Rojid, S. (2006). *COMESA trade potential: a gravity approach*. Applied Economics Letters, 13(14).

Salera, V. (1951). *The Customs Union issue*. Jacob Viner. Journal of Political Economy, 59(1), 84.

The EastAfrican. (2020). Kenya recalls envoy, expels Somali ambassador. ePaper, 6 July. Available at: <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/news/east-africa/kenya-recalls-envoy-expels-somali-ambassador-1412536>.

tradebarriers.org. (2024). *Complaint NTB-000-947*. TradeBarriers.org. Available at: <https://www.tradebarriers.org/complaint/NTB-000-947>.

Wanyama, L. (2013). *The Economic Diplomacy of Kenya's Regional Interests* (Occasional Paper No. 137). Africa Portal, 1 February. South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA). Available at: [https://africaportal.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/saia\\_sop\\_137\\_wanyama\\_20130227.pdf](https://africaportal.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/saia_sop_137_wanyama_20130227.pdf).

# Chapter Six

## Party Cartelisation Re-Imaged: Examining Displaced Representation in Political Parties in Africa

Edson Ziso

### Abstract

The world over, political parties have long been regarded as the primary vehicle through which citizens participate in shaping political, social, and economic discourses. This chapter argues, however, that such an assumption rests on several flawed premises, chief among them being that parties are owned by and representative their constituent members, particularly the grassroots 'base'. In Africa, most (ruling) parties emerged from liberation war movements and as they morphed from military organisations into post-colonial political outfits, the aspirations of the general population were readily and unquestionably assumed to be mediated through them. Nearly half a century later, however, even with the rise of non-liberation parties, the continent continues to grapple with a cocktail of political, economic, and social crises, including violent conflict. It is therefore necessary to place political parties under closer scrutiny as part of the wider debate on Africa's troubled political development. Despite claiming to be people-driven, people-oriented and people-centred, most parties have become increasingly detached from the ordinary citizen. Drawing on the cartelisation of parties' thesis developed by Katz and Mair, while reimagining it in the African context, this chapter contends that citizens are increasingly excluded from national processes, disenfranchised, and alienated from governance at the local to the national levels. This disconnection stems from the capture of parties by small but powerful political elite, working in collusion with specific economic, political, and military interests, and transforming them into self-serving cartels with little regard for the general membership.

**Keywords:** Cartelisation, Political Party, ZANU PF, Representation, Africa

### Introduction

Given the behaviour of political parties in Africa, both ruling and opposition, there is an urgent need to interrogate why they are now associated with injustice, exclusion, corruption, nepotism, sexism and internal member displacement. Originally, parties were intended to bring together people of shared political persuasion and serve the common good. Yet, today they appear increasingly detached from their founding principles, which are generally premised on broad-based political action that advances the aspirations of their members and upholding shared values.

Take just three examples: Zimbabwe's ruling Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) declares *unity, peace and development* as its founding values (ZANU PF, n.d.); Kenya's Kenya African National Union (KANU) cites *respect for human rights and freedom, accountability, transparency, social justice and fairness* (KANU Party, n.d.); while South Africa's African National Congress (ANC) espouses the *creation of a united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society* (African National Congress, n.d.).

The reality, however, paints a totally different picture. In disregard of their stated values, principles, and aims, parties have become institutions serving the narrow interests of their leadership. Instead of prioritising the millions of rank-and-file members who elected them, they privilege elite internal and external groups bound by business and commercial ties.

The idea of the political party as an agency members' political aspirations is therefore fast evaporating. This does not mean that the party system is in decline; rather, it is being consolidated as an instrument for personal gain and profiteering, while being publicly presented as a membership-driven organisation to maintain the façade of citizen participation.

The irony is that this is happening when there are more political parties and members than ever before. To understand this paradox, it is instructive to examine the question of control: who really is in control of the commanding heights of the political party? Are the millions of card-carrying members who are always reminded during election seasons that the party "belongs" to them truly in charge of anything? If so, why is their own party involved in underwriting deals and arrangements that undermine the economic interests of the 'owners of the party', including forced evictions from economically viable spaces like mines and farms?

Party cartelisation is not only undermining true economic emancipation but also eroding representative democracy on the continent. It is displacing the ordinary people from what should be their most important, and sometimes only, avenue to key national processes. Unsurprisingly, voter apathy, especially among young people, is rising in countries like Zimbabwe, South Africa, Zambia, Nigeria, and Kenya, as people lose faith in democratic processes.

For instance, in Zimbabwe's 2023 elections, turnout dropped from 85.10 per cent in 2018 to 68.86 per cent (Harris, 2023). In South Africa, in just eight years into its democracy following the end of apartheid, young people were already disengaging from formal politics due to a sense of alienation from elite bargaining and neglect of their priorities (Hofmeyr, 2004). More recently, a Konrad Adenauer Stiftung report showed that fewer than 20 per cent of South Africans aged 8 to 35 registered to vote in the 2021 local elections (IRR, 2024). Similarly, Zambia's 2015 presidential by-election witnessed the country's lowest voter turnout in its democratic history, just 32.36 per cent (Mataka and Nkandu, 2020).

By using examples from Zimbabwe, this study interrogates both the relevance and usefulness of political parties in representing diverse constituencies. It provides a basis for discussion on how parties can be restored to perform their intended role and provokes fresh thinking about one of Africa's most trusted political systems, questioning its efficacy as currently constituted.

The study contributes in two main ways. First, it adds to the growing body of work showing that while party cartelisation is often marginalised as a category of analysis in the African

democracy and good governance studies, it is in fact central to understanding politics and development. Party cartelisation has shaped the establishment of democracy and governance as subfields, influenced inclusive development, and remains key to mechanisms for effective citizen participation. It compels us to ask: has the African political party experiment served its original purpose? If not, what purpose is it pursuing and whose interests is it now serving?

Second, by demonstrating how political parties displace their general members, the study reignites the debate on Africa's political underdevelopment and intra-party democracy (Omodia, 2011; Randall, 2007). Despite being pervasive in the history and practice of politics, the cartelisation concept remains under-theorised. This work seeks to address that gap by analysing how parties disenfranchise millions while claiming to represent them.

The chapter is structured in three sections. Section One reviews the literature on the origins, evolution, roles and functions of political parties, situating them within the African context and questioning the applicability of the party concept on the continent. Section Two presents several examples from Zimbabwe that illustrates the alienation of party members from decision-making, showing how ZANU PF has become part of a cartel marked by collusion between senior officials and external interests in mining and agriculture. Section Three then concludes the chapter.

## Political Parties: Theory and Evolution

As a concept and practice, the origins of political parties can be traced to the United States (US), which was the first country to develop fully fledged parties in the 1820s (CLA, 2024). Parties emerged from the struggles between the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists during 1787 Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia. The rapid evolution of political parties from factions represented an inventive American response to political conflict (Library of Congress, 2024).

At the time, however, the term *political party* was not in use; the prevailing term was *factions*. As the idea of party developed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the concept of a party had begun to acquire a more distinct and positive meaning than faction (Hoadley, 1980). It was several decades later that the factions evolved into parties. Supporters of Thomas Jefferson began calling themselves Democratic-Republicans in the 1830s, a movement that eventually gave rise to the Republican Party in 1854.

The key difference between parties and factions lies in the scope of representation, durability and depth of organisation. As Sartori explains, parties “are instrumental to collective benefits.... [They] are functional agencies—they serve purposes and fulfil roles—while factions are not” (Sartori, 1976). As a form of political organisation, the idea of parties soon spread to France in the first year of the French Revolution and to Britain through the opposition of Tories and Whigs, engulfing the whole of Europe and the rest of the world.

By the First World War, almost all electoral contests and parliamentary struggles pivoted around well-organised parties in all representative democracies (Boix and Sokes, 2009). Once a party system develops, the basic principle is that through free and fair competition, the winning party in a given election gains a sufficient parliamentary majority and governs independently (Boix and Sokes, 2009).

While there is no universally accepted definition of a political party, several researchers and scholars have attempted to conceptualise it. Burke described a party as “a body of men united, for promoting by their joint endeavours the national interest, upon some particular principle in which they all agreed” (Burke, 2002). Maliyamkono and Kanyongolo (2003) define it as an organised association of people working together to compete for political office and to promote agreed-upon policies. Mayo (2008) regards political parties as the pre-eminent institutions of modern democratic governance, while Ryan (1971), views them as union of like-minded individual working toward the long-term implementation of political principles and programmes. Wherever the political party has emerged, it appears to perform some common functions in a wide variety of political systems at various stages of social, political, and economic development.

Merriam’s itemization, often considered representative of the party-function literature, includes: (1) the selection of official personnel; (2) the formulation of public policies; (3) serving as conductors or critics of government; (4) political education (including nationalisation of opinion); and (5) acting as intermediaries between individuals and government (Scarrow, 1967). On this basis, political parties are often treated as synonymous with democracy, or at least as its key drivers. Therefore, the functioning of a democratic system, whether in advanced or developing democracies, largely depends to some extent on the nature, composition, organisation, ideals, and institutionalisation of political parties, which in turn contribute to democratic consolidation (Chidi, 2022).

According to Dahl (1971), the existence of political parties, competing for power within a framework that guarantees equal chances for all is one of the fundamental characteristics of a democratic regime. In addition, how a party performs often has a direct relation to the performance of the regime, especially if it is a ruling party.

There is a positive correlation between the behaviour of the party, its performance in government and, in particular, the entrenchment of a democratic culture and general good governance. Ideally, a political party in a democratic country should be an expression of the community. Its legitimacy should lie in the fact that it is backed by a mass of people. There is a reasonable expectation that ‘whether in a free society or under a totalitarian regime, the organisation called the party is expected to organise public opinion and to communicate demands to the centre of governmental power and decision’ (Binder et al., 1966).

Political parties, as the custodians of modern representative liberal democracy, were at the forefront of these shifts from authoritarianism to liberal democracy. By joining and becoming *card-carrying* members, the ordinary person is expected to be a crucial stake and stockholder, for by virtue of being connected to the party, they effectively participate in the running of their country.

It is the party which affords them that voice, space and platform. As members, they are also responsible for electing individuals to certain positions of authority, according them the absolute custodians of legitimacy. Some scholars argue that democratic systems cannot do without parties, and even non-democratic regimes use them in disguise (Kura, 2007). Kura cites the examples of Cuba, North Korea, China, Saddam’s Iraq, Hitler’s Germany, other totalitarian regimes, and some monarchical states in the Middle East (who) had or have political parties (Kura, 2023).

However, some scholars, like Salih (2003), caution against a blanket approach in assigning the roles and functions of political parties. In the case of Western political parties, “the development of parties seems bound up with that of democracy, that is to say with the extension of popular suffrage and parliamentary prerogatives” (Kura, 2007). While discussing the origins of political parties, Stokes (1999) agrees that while they are endemic to democracy, they are not part of the formal definition of democracy; nor do the constitutions of most democracies dictate a role for parties.

In Africa, party systems range from one-party states to two-party systems and multi-party systems. Morse (1896) asserts that when a party is first formed, the bond which unites all its members is that of common principles. It is equally important to note that, in a democracy, political parties serve the important function of aggregating interests, channeling disparate social groupings and interests into a common socio-political platform and thus providing a stabilising effect to an otherwise fractious society (Stokes, 1999).

Although the definitions of a political party may differ, certain commonalities suggest a universalised understanding of political parties: they entrench democracy, socialize members into democratic norms, and act as vehicles for political participation. Ideally, they reflect the interests of their members and shape political processes that are broadly acceptable. On this basis, political parties can be understood as voluntary organisations pursuing various agendas consistent with people’s interests and aspirations, thereby facilitating a democratic function whose motive is to ultimately involve the people in the governance process. Even more crucially, none of these definitions accommodates the dominance of powerful domestic or external interests, which raises important questions for context where such capture occurs.

## The Political Party in Africa

As Africa’s decolonisation process was coming to a close, the Cold War was ending, and the West’s victory meant that a capitalistic-democratic culture was taking root. Political parties emerged as a consequent political institution. They were, however, foreign to Africa; borrowed concepts that newly independent African countries adopted as a given almost by default.

The political party quickly became one of the natural, main drivers of the democratic experiment. However, most of the founding parties with roots in the liberation war, such as ZANU PF, Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM), KANU, the Cameroonian National Union (CMU) (later Cameroon People’s Democratic Movement (CPDM)), People’s Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), Mozambique Liberation Front (FRELIMO), and others, went on to establish and entrench one-party systems, undermining this “new” democratic dispensation. Leaders justified the one-party model as the “people’s party”, designed to serve urgent national needs: consolidation of independence, reducing tribalism, and suppressing divisions.

Unlike in the West, where the concept originated from a relatively democratic contest, African political parties emerged during colonial rule, which was neither democratic nor legitimate. Salih (2003) notes, that ‘in a sense, African political parties emerged in a nondemocratic setting, which to a large extent informed their practice during independence’. It is for this

reason that Basedau et al. (2007) argue that African political parties have authoritarian legacies, manifested in frequent attraction to 'strong' and hegemonic leadership. While Sandbrook (1996) acknowledges that democracy in its purest form has struggled to take root and hold on the continent, he insists that "political parties, in Africa, as elsewhere in the world play a vital role in democracy". Crotty (1993) likewise argues that although parties as such are not, usually, part of the definition of democracy, the emergence of some form of multi-party system is seen both as an unavoidable consequence of basic democratic rights, such as freedom to associate and freedom of expression; a necessary component of the idea of democracy as it is practiced in real-world democracies.

Debates over democracy in Africa remain divided. In relative terms, democracy in Africa is generally young and developing. Some scholars assert that the notion is actually non-existent in Africa (Uwizeyimana, 2012). Others like Mbaku (2022), caution against such absolutism, maintaining that democracy does exist on the continent; what has to be guarded against are the 'threats' to it, such as constitutional coups (Mbaku, 2020).

The liberation war parties in Africa, which became the first-generation governments, had thus ridden on the momentum of anti-colonial struggles. They styled themselves as mass organisations that carried the aspirations of the downtrodden, dispossessed and marginalised indigenous majority. It was therefore widely assumed, especially in the immediate post-independence period, that due to their liberation war roots and freedom-fighting orientation, they would be the natural representatives of the marginalised. In countries like Zimbabwe, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, South Africa, and Namibia peasants and workers became loyal supporters, often treating liberalisation parties as permanent political homes rooted in anti-colonial nostalgia.

However, as Smith (2013) points out, the argument, which often appears in anti-colonialist struggles that members need maximum unity among all classes to get rid of the colonial power and achieve national liberation. This has caused problems because it has been abused by leaders to entrench authoritarianism in the name of fostering national unity and oneness. Over time, these parties evolved into mass or catch-all organisations, but increasingly detached from their members. Questions arise: who are the 'masses' in contemporary politics? Or should we now think of the 'critical mass' instead? Where does the commoner in the village, townships, and farms fit in the modern party? Beyond attending rallies and endorsing elites, what role do they play in decision-making and in the running of the party, and by extension, the country? Answers to these questions suggest that ordinary members have very little or marginal influence, as parties are dominated by elites.

These questions are important because the liberation war party did not take long to disappoint. In almost all post-independence African countries, it became clear within the first decade or so of independence that the party of liberation was more than prepared to abandon many of its promises. For example, it did not take long after assuming power for the liberation party to show that it was not interested in relinquishing political power, or even sharing it meaningfully. This was partly influenced by Cold War politics and the destructive effects of the one-party-state ideology, or the dominant party state at the very least. Decades after independence, the same political parties continue to dominate in Tanzania (Chama Cha Mapinduzi - CCM), Zimbabwe (ZANU PF), South Africa (ANC),

Kenya (KANU), and Botswana (Botswana Democratic Party - BDP), among others. While this has created or contributed to various problems associated with long-term incumbency, including, but not limited to, corruption, nepotism, and economic downfall, the focus of this study is, however, on the representativeness of the political party.

Put differently, the question asks: by staying in power for this long, has the ruling party become more connected to the ordinary membership, the ordinary men and women who make up the base of the mass party, or has this simply led to increased disconnectedness, with ordinary members confined to the periphery? So often, members are just treated as voters without influence in governing their parties. Several examples illustrate this propensity.

During the intraparty nomination of candidates, it was mainly the few elites who eventually determine who should stand during elections. The frustration with Africa's founding political parties cosyng up to capital, big business, and other commercial interests inevitably contributed to the rapid formation and proliferation of opposition parties promising to effectively reorient politics in ways that brought the people 'back in'. The emergence of alternative political parties was directly linked to the rise of new issue-based political organisations, such as trade union-backed movements, which arose due to workers' disillusionment with the original party's exploitative relations with capital, both local and foreign.

It had become clearer a few years into independence that the new leaders and former freedom fighters at the helm of the party had become the new bourgeoisie, the new capitalists, and the new employers. In many cases, their trade practices were worse than those of the colonialists (Lestari, 2016). These opposition parties emerged starting from the 1990s, during the so-called 'Third Wave era of democracy'. They include the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (Zambia), the Movement for Democratic Change (Zimbabwe), the Economic Freedom Fighters (South Africa), the Forum for the Restoration of Democracy (FORD) (Kenya), and others. They emerged to not only challenge the nationalist narrative of liberation war parties, but to present themselves as alternatives given what they saw as the betrayal of the people's aspirations through a litany of missteps, including and ranging from corruption, economic mismanagement, sheer incompetence, to outright genocide. These post-modernist parties mobilised the people on the basis of and in the promise of a renewed agenda of Africa's development. They reflected upon the failure of the liberation war parties and articulated new visions for Africa, which took into account emerging forces like globalisation and internationalism. Suffice it to say, these new parties have not fared much better when they have assumed the position of ruling parties themselves. They, too, have faced elite capture when in power.

Implicit here may be the assumption that the party system is not working in Africa because it is a foreign concept. However, the disappointment and frustration with political parties is certainly not unique to Africa. Political parties are dysfunctional everywhere across the world. In rich democracies, the entire political system has been captured by highly educated managerial and professional elites who operate according to their narrow and well-insulated points of view (Lindsey, 2022).

In Australia, the party currently in power, the left-leaning Australian Labour Party (ALP), has at times failed to differentiate itself from the Liberal Party in many respects. For example, it has ratified and continued some far-right security policies inherited from the Liberals.

Traditionally, these policies are detached from what the ALP has always stood for. The signing of the AUKUS (an alliance between Australia, United Kingdom, United States) submarine deal is a case in point (Australian Submarine Agency, n.d.). After opposing this arrangement in principle for years, the new Labour government under Anthony Albanese swiftly signed on to it without consulting the labour base. In 2008, the Democrats in the United States Congress helped pass a huge stimulus package for big banks worth billions of dollars, despite widespread protests from ordinary members of the Democratic Party who disagreed that the banks were ‘too big to fail’. The elected representatives felt otherwise, completely ignoring the massive protests against bailing out big capital. Many other examples can be found throughout the Western and non-Western worlds.

While this study acknowledges this broader dysfunction, it focuses specifically on party cartelization in Africa. By examining how parties have evolved into instruments of elite control, it interrogates the extent to which African political parties, both ruling and opposition, still serve as representative institutions for their members.

## **The Political Party as a Cartel: Theoretical Framework**

This study is inspired by Richard S. Katz and Peter Mair, who examined the phenomenon of the birth of a new party known as the party of the cartel. The concept of the “cartel party” was first proposed as a means of drawing attention to patterns of inter-party collusion or cooperation as well as competition. It was also a way of emphasising the influence of the state on party development.

Cartel parties are defined as ‘characterised by the interpenetration of party and state, and also by a pattern of inter-party collusion’ (Detterbeck, 2008). Katz and Mair analyse the development of the political party vis-à-vis its relationship not only with civil society, but also with the state. They argue that as political parties have moved closer to the state than to the people, we observe a phenomenon similar to cartelisation (Rashkova, 2020). A cartel party or cartel political party is a party that utilises the resources of the state to maintain its position within the political system, operating similarly to a cartel (Katz and Mair, 2009a). ‘Cartelisation’ has flourished as a subfield of political science over the last three decades. The ‘cartel party thesis’ aimed to make sense of wide-ranging developments taking place within political parties and the party systems of advanced capitalist states (Piquer and Jäger, 2020).

This analysis is therefore an attempt to adopt and adapt this thesis in African democracies. While Katz and Mair focus on inter-party collusion, which implicates several parties within a nation’s party system, this chapter examines cartelisation in terms of the internal dynamics of the party and its collusion with non-party internal and external interests. The study contends that to best understand cartelisation of political parties in Africa, it should be viewed from the perspective of the significant degree of intra-party collusion with special interests, occasioning the displacement of ordinary party members to the margins of decision-making.

While this study builds upon Katz and Mair’s thesis, it should be emphasised from the outset that it advances a different argument while using the same analytical tools. Katz and Mair developed their thesis with specific reference to the political context of Europe,

predominantly Western Europe, as far back as 1992. In fact, the thesis was conceived following data collected from “eleven West European countries plus the United States that were included in the project” (Katz and Mair, 2009b). Cartelisation of parties was therefore conceptualised in terms of collusion of political parties. A phenomenon in which the parties share rather than compete over resources, and effectively conspire to protect their collective interests. When political parties merge or combine, ‘the cartel parties become more similar to one another – in organisation, in policy, in the career patterns of their leaders – it becomes easier for them to imagine themselves in cooperation and to form coalition governments together (Katz, 2022).

The term cartel is borrowed from the corporate world. A cartel exists when businesses agree to act together instead of competing with each other. Cartels cheat consumers and other businesses by limiting competition through the control of the production and distribution of a product or service. By substituting consumers for voters, the concern is that, much like cartels in the corporate world, not only does this undermine democracy but it also eliminates the possibility of smaller parties and minority voices being heard.

The primary democratic function of political parties is to link the citizenry with the government (Sartori, 1976). According to Katz (2022), parties see themselves as brokers among social groups and between social groups and the state, rather than as the political arms of specific group. It is widely expected and/or assumed that political parties represent the interests of their members. By participating in the processes of their political party, the assumption is that the voices of the membership can ultimately shape the national debate. Considered from the perspective of political self-determination, it is essential that groups within or categories of the population collectively demand participation or representation, especially for the recognition and protection of the collective interest. However, the elite capture of politics has done more than roil cultural conflict to the point of imperilling democratic stability (Lindsey, 2022). When special interests merge with political parties at the elite level, the first casualty is the general members, whose control and influence in the party is effectively dislodged.

Interestingly, even in the face of this collusion with other forces outside the party, the drivers of the party (elites) have continued to focus on finding creative ways to portray and sell the party as still a broad-based, consensus-driven, and people-backed movement that listens to and accommodates members’ concerns. This performative function is done in a manner consistent with Bernard Manin notion of ‘audience democracy’— through the provision of spectacle, image, and theatre. This is the public persona portrayed as a means of officially maintaining a positive narrative, optics, and a politically correct posture to disguise the cartelisation of the party.

This is manifested variously, including in public pronouncements at political rallies, annual themes, insignia on party regalia, nationalist-leaning foreign policy pronouncements, among others. Throughout these public performances, the ‘people’ are centred as the focus of the party and its struggles. However, the reality reflects a different story, as the rhetoric is gravely inconsistent with the actions of the party. It is increasingly difficult to reconcile the party’s claims to be people-driven, people-centred, and people-focused, while the top echelons everyday engage in behaviours and activities that essentially sell the party to various special interests, to the detriment of card-carrying members.

## The Cartel in Action: Political Party Alienation and Plunder

In this section, the study employs Katz and Mair's analytical tools in their assessment of party cartelisation in Europe to unpack party cartelisation in Africa, with a specific reference to Zimbabwe. This analytical framework is applicable because, despite the different forms of cartelisations at play, the ultimate aims, objectives, and consequences of the cartel mentality are the same. The section will illustrate this through real-life examples in the Zimbabwean context, where cartelisation involving the ruling party in collusion with some powerful interests has had a devastating impact on ordinary members' interests.

Party cartelisation in Europe, explained as inter-party collusion, resulted in negative impacts on the members of the parties. In 2001, Schmitter observed in a now well-known piece that "parties are not what they once were" (Schmitter, 2001). The past he refers to is, of course, the past associated with the mass party. This study argues that the time is also ripe to question the mass party in Africa and examine it against its public persona of being representative of its members. There are several indicators that clearly signal the extent of the party's increasingly distant relationship with the people.

As a representative organisation, the party has been known to thrive on forging healthy and mutually beneficial alliances with other stakeholders with whom it shares some common interests in furthering the aspirations of its base (general members). As a result of party cartelisation in Europe, formal party membership declined, as did party psychological identification (Katz and Mair, 2009a). The importance of members and indeed their attachment to the party is severely affected when the party no longer relies on them for its survival. The same is being observed in Zimbabwe and Africa at large. This not only disempowers members but also affords the party elites an opportunity to deploy patronage as a strategic resource.

Of late, there has been an apparent "weakening of ties between parties and civil society" in ways that reveal the growing chasm between the party elites and the people. Empirical findings show that most mainstream contemporary parties do not perceive a strong membership as necessary and, consequently, rarely endeavour to invest in their organisations (Dalton and Wattenberg 2000). A good illustration of this is party funding. Parties like ZANU PF and the ANC, through senior membership and other key individuals, have become so rich that they can sustain themselves financially without relying on members' contributions.

Whereas civil society played a crucial role earlier in mobilising financial resources for the party, there is a growing realisation that the party is alienating itself from this traditional support base and creating new alliances with big business or other entities of various financial interests that can fund it quite generously. It has reached a point where the party is no longer dependent on the financial contributions of the general membership or other traditional stakeholders, but on a few powerful and often unnamed interests that can fund it. When members' financial contributions are no longer required, they subsequently lose a crucial voice in the running of the party and its direction.

Katz and Mair's (2009), studies in Europe concluded that due to cartelisation, "parties are increasingly part of the state, and increasingly removed from society, and this new

situation encourages them, or even forces them, to cooperate with one another". When one juxtaposes this with the Zimbabwean case, where the party is in bed with external commercial interests, there is clear evidence of the cartel's co-operation resulting in outcomes so detrimental to society.

There has been a tectonic shift in global politics, occasioned by the re-emergence of China and other emerging powers like India, South Korea, Russia, the Middle East, among others. What is emerging is a huge interest in Africa and its resources in what many scholars are already seeing as a new 'scramble for Africa' (Ayers, 2013) (or for some, 'the 21st Century scramble for Africa' (Lee, 2006)). The continent is one of the richest in the world, endowed with incredible natural resources including oil, natural gas, uranium, coal, gold, diamonds, coltan, cobalt, copper, chrome, tin, iron, magnesium, nickel, platinum, lead, and zinc (Lee, 2006)). The majority of these resources are crucial for the future of the 'new economy', including energy transition minerals.

A few of the fastest-growing economies in the world are in Africa, and the continent is projected to be the fastest-growing region in 2027. Africa also has the youngest population in the world. According to some projections, one in four people in the world will be African by 2050. Unlike the original scramble of the 1880s at the Berlin Conference, the latest one at least affords Africa the opportunity to make choices beneficial to its own interests and those of its people. Zimbabwe neatly fits into this description. However, Chinese investment in the economy, which is presided over by ZANU PF through party-to-party relations with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) of China, has raised several concerns.

China is heavily invested in Zimbabwe's mining sector. This has come at a cost to villagers, citizens and the economy at large as foreign investor interests appear to be prioritised ahead of local interests. Reports of villagers being evicted to pave the way for these investors, often at short notice and with very little compensation, are becoming increasingly rife in Zimbabwe (Advent, 2022). Additionally, some mining operations encroach on villagers, leaving a trail of both environmental destruction and health concerns. In 2019, 20,000 villagers faced eviction as another Chinese investor prepared to take over a mine-rich village on the outskirts of the capital, Harare. T

he Standard (2019) newspaper reported that while Aihua Jianye Company unveiled plans to invest 500 million dollars in the quarry mine, the project was allegedly mired in corruption. It quoted then Deputy Information Minister, Energy Mutodi, who was also a lawmaker for the area, as claiming that the license was granted without prior consultations with residents within a five-kilometre radius from the mining site, who were now facing eviction. "It's unfortunate that MPs are not consulted prior to the granting of mining rights," Mutodi said in an interview with the newspaper. The Standard also relayed threats by villagers fearing eviction without compensation, to resist the move. "Something has to be done to stop this company from operating because we cannot be displaced at such a difficult time," says Tobias Arifadika, a community leader from the nearby Mverechena business centre (The Standard, 2019; RFI, 2019).

Katz and Mair observed that cartelisation clearly contributed to the rise of populist anti-party-system parties that appeal directly to public perceptions that the mainstream parties are indifferent to the desires of ordinary citizen (Katz and Mair, 2009a). It is not difficult to

see shades of this in Zimbabwe's mining sector, which is probably the highest theatre of cartelisation in the country. The mining sector is crucial for Zimbabwe's economic recovery prospects. This extractive sector, which is fast overtaking agriculture as Zimbabwe's economic mainstay, is, however, a cauldron of cartelisation involving the party and intricate business partnerships. Unfortunately, the business dealings are mired in controversy, with reports indicating massive underhanded deals, under-receipting, and outright smuggling.

At the end of the day, nothing substantial accrues to the Zimbabwean state in terms of real revenues for the government coffers. Despite Zimbabwe's strict mining code, which sets strict licensing rules complete with environmental impact studies and compensation for displaced families, many foreign companies tapping into the country's vast mineral resources still manage to operate outside the rules. A recent report by the Centre for Natural Resources Governance (Garura, 2025), a research and advocacy civil society organisation, aimed at promoting citizen participation and good governance of natural resources, investigated Chinese investment in Zimbabwe.

The report covered four thematic areas, namely environmental impact, social and cultural impact, economic impact, labour rights and community beneficiation. It concluded that the relationship between Chinese-owned extractive companies and communities in Zimbabwe is unfriendly, adversarial and fraught with mistrust and deep suspicion. It cites overwhelming evidence of outright disdain and disregard for the cultural sensitivities of host communities by the Chinese investors. Affected communities invariably question why the Chinese extractive investors enjoy that leeway to violate the environmental, cultural, and social rights of local Zimbabweans with impunity (Garura, 2025).

By their very nature, cartels prioritise self-preservation. After making similar conclusions in their European study Katz and Mair asked a few questions: To what degree do the mainstream parties succeed in keeping issues that would threaten their positions off the political agenda (a question that involves the counter-factual: can evidence be found, for example in the form of efforts by interest groups, of issues that "should have" found a place on the political agenda, but did not)? (Katz and Mair, 2009b). Put differently, would cartel parties ever advance people-centred social and economic policies if they threatened their selfish interests?

From the Zimbabwean situation, the answer is overwhelmingly negative. As pointed out by Fairplanet, human rights groups are worried about the increasing number of internally displaced people in Zimbabwe due to mining operations involving the ruling elites and their foreign partners. In late April 2023, unnamed 'new owners' of Ran Mine, a defunct gold mine some 100-kilometre northeast of Zimbabwe's capital, Harare, gave 500 families of its former workers a 48-hour notice to vacate the mine compound that most of them had called home their entire lives (Zenda, 2005). This can only happen due to the collusion between local party elites and external mining interests. The Standard newspaper reported that "up to 20,000 villagers face eviction from their homes in Domboshava, a mountainous neighbourhood overlooking the capital, as a Chinese investor prepares to launch mining operations" (The Standard, 2019; RFI, 2019). This deal was struck without any prior consultation with villagers. As Pelizzo aptly wonders, in a cartelised political environment, "has public opinion apparently moved in one direction while the positions of all mainstream parties have moved in the other?" (Pelizzo, 2006).

## **Riding on Membership Loyalty and Ignorance to Facilitate Legitimacy**

It is also apparent that the elites in the party take advantage of the loyalty of some of their members, especially the least educated, marginalised and generally ordinary members. The study agrees with Lestari's observation that ignorance among the general public about the existence of the cartel party has provided more space and opportunities for the existence of the cartel party to carry out its agendas.

It is generally a norm that once people join a party, it becomes a lifetime commitment. As politicians require votes every election cycle, they benefit from this high degree of loyalty by being returned to office. Once in office, they use the political power and influence of the office to strike all sorts of deals that not only enrich them but also solidify their political careers. If one considers ZANU PF, it is a nationalist political party, but with its support base concentrated in the rural areas. It styles itself as the vanguard of Zimbabwe's independence by virtue of having fought the armed liberation struggle and delivered independence.

It is vital to understand that the war of liberation in Zimbabwe was almost exclusively fought in the countryside. As a result, people in the rural areas bore the brunt of the liberation war, including deaths, injuries, humiliation, landmines, restrictions, fighting, and collaboration. They are thus psychologically and consciously tied to the ruling party in unique, lasting inter-generational ways. This explains why, even when ZANU PF has presided over the ruining of what was once Africa's most promising economic jewel, it continues to get support from this rural electorate. It should also be emphasised that this is worsened by the information gap that ensures the ruling party retains deep-seated political capital in these spaces.

Vital information and exposure to the real shenanigans of the party, especially the corrupt activities of its officials, as well as its dalliance with the global capitalist class, are scarce, and when available, hardly fully understood. The demographics in the rural areas are such that there is a huge concentration of older citizens whose loyalty to the party is deeply ingrained and thus incapable of fully holding the leadership accountable.

## **Illicit Financial Flows and the Party's Increasingly Intricate Commercial Ties**

Political parties across the continent are increasingly engaged in practices that are detrimental to ordinary members and, by extension, citizens. Veritas, an organisation that monitors economic governance globally, concluded that it is impossible to provide a precise estimate of how much money flows illicitly from Zimbabwe. The amounts involved are certainly enormous. Between 2000 and 2020, Zimbabwe is estimated to have lost over 32 billion US dollars through illicit financial flows.

Between 2009 and 2013, Zimbabwe is estimated to have lost 2.83 billion US dollars. In 2019 alone, according to the chairperson of the Zimbabwe Anti-Corruption Commission, Zimbabwe lost an estimated 3 billion US dollars (Veritas, 2022). The individuals implicated are the ZANU PF elites and their associates linked to them locally, regionally and internationally. The popular 'gold mafia' documentary that was produced by Al Jazeera in

2023 over a four-part series (Al Jazeera English, 2023) clearly showed the extent of the party's involvement in the cartel business.

The proliferation of commercial ties between political parties in Africa and global capital is one of the most significant indicators of the drift away from the people towards business and profit. Although investment and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) are sought after to help ailing economies on the continent, the amount of accompanying underhanded deals and illicit financial flows that are consistently reported to be costing the continent dearly is staggering. The number of corruption scandals, as well as legal, social, economic, and political issues, and those in other countries, which often involve political party elites presents a challenge for political parties in maintaining the credibility of their party (Lestari, 2016).

Land is a very precious resource in Zimbabwe, as the country is basically an agro-based economy despite the rise of the mining sector. Competing land claims between black elites and the genuinely landless people on one hand and foreign and white capitalists on the other led to the politicisation of the land reform programme (Rwodzi and Muzorewa 2023). Access to and control of land are thus key indicators of who holds power. There are so many reports of top party officials displacing poor villagers who are ZANU PF members from resettlement areas and ancestral lands to pave the way for themselves or their external contacts with whom they have business dealings.

To illustrate, in 2023, Zimbabwe's Secretary for Information, Nick Mangwana, was identified as having played a role in the displacement of villagers at two farms in Chegutu. According to media reports, Mangwana teamed up with ZANU PF Mhondoro-Mubaira legislator Freddy Kapuya and business mogul Lionel Mhlanga to displace the villagers in Thorndyke and Hopewell farms in Chegutu East. Mhlanga is Bravura Holdings' representative in the southern African countries. Bravura is owned by Nigerian billionaire, Benedict Peters, who has mining interests in the country (ZimEye, 2022). In the Masvingo Province, hundreds of villagers who settled in Mushandike Resettlement Area more than two decades ago were forcibly evicted. They had their homes destroyed and were also arrested for 'illegally' occupying land, yet they had been resettled by the same government (Zimbabwe Situation, 2024).

In their in-depth study of the politics of Zimbabwe's much-touted Fast-track Land Reform Programme, Rwodzi and Muzorewa (2023) unearthed a clear pattern of party heavyweights securing the best land, while the ordinary supporters were pushed into less attractive areas. In particular, business moguls linked to the party were awarded commercially profitable land in peri-urban areas, from which they developed residential and industrial properties, generating substantial profits. One such example was Pinnacle Properties owned by Phillip Chiyangwa, a business tycoon, which acquired land around Harare. Chiyangwa is a known long-term financier of the party.

As alluded to earlier, mining is emerging as the most important economic sector in Zimbabwe, rivalling agriculture. The country is endowed with over 60 different mineral occurrences. The major ones produced include gold, platinum group metals (PGMs), diamonds, nickel, chrome, coal, lithium and black granite. Experts estimate Zimbabwe's platinum reserves to last for the next 400 years. The country also owns huge reserves of uranium, natural gas, antimony, iron, steel, and chrome. However, these precious minerals and resources are being exchanged largely in opaque deals and arrangements that are neither accountable nor transparent.

As Garura (2025) noted, one of the major challenges associated with mining critical minerals in Africa is the displacement of local communities. Mining companies often require large areas of land for their operations, leading to the forced relocation of communities and the destruction of homes, farms, and other sources of livelihood. In short, other than being physically displaced, citizens are also asking who the mineral wealth and other resources are benefitting. For many African citizens, what the elected party is doing with the country's resources remains a mystery. Ordinary members of the political party in government are also in the dark despite claiming that they, through their party, are in power.

Investigative reports emerging from Zimbabwe, however, suggest that not only are resources being distributed among known and unknown elites affiliated with the party, but they are also being acquired by external entities, sometimes disguised, presented or packaged as foreign investment. The mortgaging of resources is at extreme odds with the known ruling ZANU PF party position, which it sells to its supporters and members: total ownership of the country's natural resources by Zimbabweans and complete sovereignty against external exploitation.

It has been the collective position of ZANU PF, especially since the turn of the century, when a courageous land reform programme was undertaken in the early 2000s, that Zimbabweans needed to be masters of their own destiny by owning huge tracts of formerly white-owned land to revive the economy. In fact, at some point, ZANU PF members were encouraged to, and went on to occupy factories and companies in pursuit of the stated bold stance above. The long-running revolutionary war cry in ZANU PF is 'Zimbabwe will never be a colony again', but for many party members, this now rings hollow.

This is further exacerbated by the party's strategic use of its 45-year incumbency to influence the electorate. The ZANU PF party has long been accused by civil society organisations and opposition leaders of using state resources and traditional chiefs to perpetuate the party's ideologies and influence elections, particularly in their heartland: the rural areas. The 2023 general elections once again validated this demographic and space fact. ZANU PF did well, as usual, in the rural areas, while its performance in towns and urban areas was, as usual, very poor. However, because the majority of people live in the rural areas, ZANU PF easily secures 'victory' on the tide of this rather captured population.

The ignorance of the general membership about the existence of the cartel party has provided more space and opportunities for the existence of the cartel party in carrying out its agendas. Frankly, most rural voters lack the knowledge and capacity to understand the phenomena of party cartels and therefore cannot see anything wrong with 'their' party. Due to a lack of information, education, and sometimes understanding of how the party functions at the highest level, the rural voter is easily taken advantage of to endorse several party resolutions that have nothing to do with their own welfare but rather the selfish interests of the party leadership, however packaged.

This level and type of disenfranchisement is extremely subtle but devastating. It leaves the party firmly in the hands of a calculating vampire class that uses the legitimate authority accorded to it by voters to engage in underhanded initiatives, making the party a conduit for varied interests.

## Conclusion

The chapter discusses how political parties have deviated from their original mandate. Using Zimbabwe as a case study, the chapter argues that political parties largely serve certain interests at the expense of the general mass membership. Adapting Katz and Mair's argument on the cartelisation of parties, but slightly modifying it, the study concludes that it is questionable whether, based on the analysis, Africa really needs political parties, given the paradox that now exists where the people are being exploited by those they elected to govern. The assumption that political parties accurately represent the people has gone unchallenged; yet, what lies beneath this assumption requires thorough analysis. Whereas the government was initially meant to be of the people, by the people, and for the people, political parties have slowly but surely rendered it a government of politicians, by politicians, and for politicians. Despite the rise of multipartyism on the continent, the quality of representation has declined as political parties have become mere patronage machines.

The party system is struggling in Africa, perhaps because it has not been established for long enough. However, its failings are under-researched. It is a borrowed concept and an ongoing experiment. It would be remembered that, at some point, even Europe, which is considered the centre of liberal democracy, struggled with the same issue. For decades, Europe struggled to integrate the idea and practice of democracy with enormous population growth. To this day, the party system remains imperfect. It is therefore unfortunate that Africa hardly questions the concept that is as foreign as it is exotic.

As more and more parties form and occupy the highly contested political space, why is this coinciding with depoliticisation among ordinary African people? Voter apathy, for example, is at its highest in countries like Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Nigeria, among others. Are we approaching an age of democracy without participation, where political parties can exist without people as long as they have financial backing from shadowy figures? The political party may as well be killing representative democracy in Africa. This chapter has attempted to interrogate the political party using the ZANU PF case study. It has moved beyond assumptions to uncover its claims to representation, nationalism, and membership-leadership dynamics. The analysis aims to stimulate new thinking for the betterment of Africa's political systems, which may include reevaluating the efficacy of political parties as currently conceived and deployed in the political space.

## References

Advent (2022). *Nick Mangwana, ZANU PF MP, Business Mogul Evict Villagers From Chegutu Farms – Report*. Pindula, 18 December. Available at: <https://www.pindula.co.zw/2022/12/18/nick-mangwana-zanu-pf-mp-business-mogul-evict-villagers-from-chegutu-farms-report/>.

African National Congress (ANC). (n.d.). *About ANC*. Available at: <https://www.anc1912.org.za/our-history/>.

Al Jazeera English. (2023). *Gold Mafia (YouTube video series 1-4)*. Al Jazeera Investigates. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=evWEuVR1XIs>.

Australian Submarine Agency. (n.d.). *AUKUS*. Available at: <https://www.asa.gov.au/aukus>.

Ayers, A. J. (2013). *Beyond Myths, Lies and Stereotypes: The Political Economy of a 'New Scramble for Africa'*. *New Political Economy*, 18:2.

Basedau, M., Erdmann, G. and Mehler, A. (eds.). (2007). *Votes, Money and Violence: Political Parties and Elections in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Uppsala: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet  
Scottsville: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.

Binder, L. et al (1966). *Political Parties and Political Development*. (SPD-6) (J. LaPalombara & M. Weiner, Eds.). Princeton University Press.

Boix, C. and Stokes, S. C. (eds) (2009). *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics (2009)*. Online edn, Oxford Academic.

Botiveau R. 2014. *Briefing: The Politics of Marikana and South Africa's Changing Labour Relations*. *African Affairs*, 113/450.

Burke, E. (2002). *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents, 1770*. In: Scarrow, S. E. (eds) *Perspectives on Political Parties*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

Center for Legislative Archives (CLA). (2024). *The Two-Party System: A Revolution in American Politics 1824 to 1840*. National Archives. Available at: <https://www.archives.gov/files/legislative/resources/ebooks/two-party-system.pdf>.

Chidi, O. (2022). *Party Politics in Africa: The roles of political parties in a democratic process*. Seminar Paper presented at Ignatius Ajar University of Education, Port Harcourt, February 2022.

Crotty, W. (1993). *Notes on the study of political parties in the Third World*. *American Review of Politics*, Vol 14, 665.

Dahl, R. A. (1971). *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Dalton, R. and Wattenberg, M. (2000). *Parties without Partisans: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Detterbeck, K. (2008). *Party Cartel and Cartel Parties in Germany*. *German Politics*, 17(1)

Garura, N. (2025). *The "Criticality" Of Critical Minerals in Zimbabwe*. Centre for Natural Resources Governance (CNRG). Available at: <https://cnrgzim.org/news/the-criticality-of-critical-minerals-in-zimbabwe/>.

Harris, L. B. (2023). *Low turnout in Zimbabwe election cost Chamisa presidency: Analysts*. CITE (Zimbabwe), 29 August. Available at: <https://cite.org.zw/low-turnout-in-zimbabwe-election-cost-chamisa-presidency-analyst>.

Hoadley, J. F. (1980). *The Emergence of Political Parties in Congress, 1789-1803*. *The American Political Science Review* 74, no. 3.

Hofmeyr, J. (2004). *Is Democracy Dated? Reflections on the Reluctance of SA's Youth to Participation in Elections*. *Youth Development Journal* 14: 49–55.

Institute of Race relations (IRR). (2024). *South Africa's Low Voter Turnout is no Laughing Matter: 5 Crucial Takeaways*. Available at: <https://irr.org.za/fan/media/south-africas-low-voter-turnout-is-no-laughing-matter-5-crucial-takeaways>.

Katz, R. S., and Mair, P. (2009a). *The Cartel Party Thesis: A Restatement*. *Perspectives on Politics* 7, no. 4.

Katz, R. S. and Mair, P. (2009b). *Perspectives on Politics, American Political Science Association*. Dec., 2009, Vol. 7, No. 4.

Katz, R. S. (2022). *The cartel party - the end of democratic party evolution?* *Irish Political Studies*, 37(2).

Kenya African National Unity (KANU) party. (n.d.). *About Us*. Available at: <https://kanuparty.org/about-us/>.

Kura, S.B. (2007). *Contemporary African Political Parties: Institutionalisation for the Sustainability of Democracy*. *Journal of African elections*. Available at: <https://www.eisa.org/storage/2023/05/2007-journal-of-african-elections-v6n1-contemporary-african-political-parties-institutionalisation-sustainability-democracy-eisa.pdf?x15448>.

Lee, M. C. (2006). *The 21st Century Scramble for Africa*. *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, 24:3.

Lestari, Y. S. (2016). *Cartel Party: An Analysis Study*. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research (ASSEHR)*, volume 81, 1st International Conference on Social and Political Development (ICOSOP 2016).

Library of Congress. (2024). *Creating the United States: Formation of Political Parties*. Available at: <https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/creating-the-united-states/formation-of-political-parties.html>.

Maliyamkono T. M. and Kanyongolo F. E. (eds). (2003). *When Political Parties Clash*. Dar es Salaam: Tema Publishers Company Ltd.

Mataka, B. and Nkandu, M. O. (2020). *The Effects of Voter Apathy on the Growth of Electoral Democracy in Zambia with Special Focus on Kabwe Central Constituency*. *International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews* Vol (1) Issue (2).

Mayo, J. (2008). *Preaching Water, Drinking Wine? Political Parties and Intra Party Democracy in East Africa: Considerations for Democratic Consolidation*. Paper presented at a seminar on Intra-Party Democracy at the African Studies Centre, Leiden University on 9 September 2008.

Mbaku, J.M. (2020). *Threats to democracy in Africa: The rise of the constitutional coup*. Brookings, 30 October. Available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/threats-to-democracy-in-africa-the-rise-of-the-constitutional-coup>.

Morse, A. D, (1896), *What is a Party?* *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 11, No. 1, Oxford University Press.

Omodia, S. M. (2011). *Party Politics and The Challenge of Political Representation in Nigeria*. *International journal of Business and social science*, 2(22).

Pelizzo, R. (2006). *The Cartel Party and the Rise of the New Extreme Right*. *Comparative European Politics* 5(2).

Piquer, J. and Jäger, A. M. M. (2020). *After the Cartel Party: 'Extra-Party' and 'Intra-Party' Techno-Populism*. *Politics and Governance*, Volume 8, Issue 4.

Randall, V. (2007). *Political parties in Africa and the representation of social groups. Votes, Money and Violence: Political Parties and Elections in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Uppsala: Nordic Africa Institute.

Rashkova, E. R. (2020). *The Party Abroad: A New Modus Operandi for Political Parties*. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 73.

RFI. (2019). *Zimbabwe villagers face China's growing appetite for minerals*. Focus on Africa, 29 April. Available at: <https://www.rfi.fr/en/africa/20190429-focus-africa-zimbabwe-villagers-eviction-growing-chinese-appetite-minerals>.

Rwodzi, A. and Muzorewa, T. T. (2023). *Land Resettlement and Elite Monopoly in Peri-Urban Harare: The Colonial Legacy of Land Ownership in Post-Colonial Zimbabwe, 2000-2019*. *Southern Journal for Contemporary History*, 48(1).

Salih, M. A. M. (2003). *Introduction: The Evolution of African Political Parties*. Pluto Press.

Sandbrook, R. (1996). *Transitions without consolidation: democratization in six African states*. *Third World Quarterly*, Vol 17 No1.

Sartori, G. (1976). *Parties and Party Systems: A Framework for Analysis*. Vol. I Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Scarrow, H. A. (1967). *The Function of Political Parties: A Critique of the Literature and the Approach*. *The Journal of Politics*, Volume 29, Issue 4, Nov.

Schmitter, P.C. (2001). *Parties Are Not What They Once Were*. Available at: <https://pollux.fid.de/r/sw-csa-ps-200301827> (visited on 17 December 2024).

Smith, M. (2013). *The Marikana Massacre and Lessons for the Left*. Vol. 2 No. 5 *Irish Marxist Review*, Vol 2 Number 5.

Stokes, S. C. (1999). *Political parties and democracy*. *Annual review of political science*, 2(1), 243-267.

The Standard. (2019). *Chinese to evict scores of villagers*. Available at: [www.thestandard.co.zw/2019/04/28/chinese-evict-scores-villagers](http://www.thestandard.co.zw/2019/04/28/chinese-evict-scores-villagers).

Uwizeyimana, D. E. (2012). *Democracy and pretend democracies in Africa: Myths of African democracies*. *Law Democracy & Dev.*, 16, 139.

Veritas. (2022). *Economic Governance Watch 10-2022-Illicit Financial Flows*. Zimbabwe, 16 December. Available at: <https://www.veritaszim.net/node/6066>.

Zimbabwe African National Unity-Patriotic Front (ZANU PF). (n.d.). *Official Website*. Available at: <https://www.zanupf.org.zw/>.

ZimEye. (2022). *Nick Mangwana Grabs Two Farms*. News, 18 December. Available at: <https://www.zimeye.net/2022/12/18/nick-mangwana-grabs-two-farms/>.

Zenda, C. (2022). *The Hidden Cost of Zimbabwe's Mining sector*. Fair Planet, 20 June. Available at: <https://www.fairplanet.org/story/the-hidden-cost-of-zimbabwes-mining-sector/> (visited on 21 November 2024).

## Conclusion

The COMESA region stands at a critical juncture in its integration journey, grappling with overlapping crises such as geopolitical competition, climate change, security instability, and governance deficits that threaten its economic and political cohesion. This book has provided a multifaceted examination of these challenges, drawing on diverse perspectives to analyse their implications for regional cooperation and development.

One of the central themes emerging from this volume is the persistent gap between policy frameworks and implementation. While COMESA has made notable strides in trade liberalisation, as seen in Kenya's efforts to align with Chapter Six of the COMESA Treaty, structural barriers such as inadequate infrastructure, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and uneven political commitment continue to hinder deeper integration. Similarly, climate change adaptation strategies, despite being enshrined in regional agreements like the COMESA Climate Change Strategy (2020–2030), face execution challenges due to financial constraints and competing national priorities.

The security landscape further complicates regional stability, as demonstrated by the EAC intervention in the DRC. The mixed outcomes of the EACRF underscore the difficulties of military-led conflict resolution in fragmented political environments. Lessons from this experience highlight the need for clearer mandates, sustainable funding mechanisms, and inclusive diplomatic engagement to ensure future interventions are more effective.

At the heart of COMESA's integration challenges lies the crisis of governance, exemplified by the rise of political cartels and elite capture in member states like Zimbabwe. The erosion of democratic institutions and the militarisation of politics undermine public trust and hinder participatory governance. A trend that risks destabilising the broader regional project. Addressing these issues requires not only institutional reforms but also a recommitment to inclusive and accountable leadership.

Yet, amidst these challenges, opportunities exist for reinvigorating COMESA's integration agenda. Nation branding, as explored in Kenya's case, offers a pathway to enhance competitiveness and attract investment, provided it is rooted in authentic cultural and economic strengths. Similarly, environmental diplomacy presents a platform for collective action on climate change, particularly through knowledge-sharing and technology transfer between member states.

Ultimately, this book underscores that regional integration is not merely an economic endeavour but a political and social one. Success will depend on COMESA's ability to foster stronger institutional cooperation, bridge policy-implementation gaps, and cultivate a shared vision among its diverse member states. By confronting its polycrisis with innovative and collaborative solutions, COMESA can redefine its role as a cornerstone of African integration in an increasingly uncertain world.

This volume serves as both a scholarly resource and a call to action, urging policymakers, researchers, and regional stakeholders to rethink strategies for a more resilient and united COMESA. The road ahead is fraught with challenges, but the insights presented here offer a foundation for meaningful progress.



