CHALLENGES FACING ECONOMIC INTEGRATION: A CASE STUDY OF EAST AFRICA COMMUNITY (EAC) 2000–2012

The East Africa Community (EAC) is one of the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in Africa, with integration in the region dating back to pre-colonial times. However, the integration process has achieved less than desired as witnessed with the collapse of the previous EAC in 1977. This study critically reviews the challenges facing economic integration in the EAC by first tracing the history of the integration process, its successes and failures, and identifies the challenges of the present EAC economic integration process. The major conclusions that emerge from the study are:

First, the overlapping REC’s membership by partner states continue to posing harmonization and coordination challenges. In addition this indicates a lack of political commitment among partner states. Second, the EAC institutions are weak as they lack the capacity to enforce sanctions against partner states who fail to implement agreements. The selection process of the members of these institutions is not democratic as they are handpicked by partner states with the absence of the citizens’ views. Finally, issues of Non-Trade barriers (NTBs), poor infrastructure and limited private sector engagement are an impediment to economic growth in the region. These problems seem to have made building a successful integration process a daunting task for the EAC, despite its perceived importance in the increasingly globalized world. Thus, partner states need to take integration not only as a pan-African ideology but more importantly as economic survival strategy.

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