

**Africa Programme
Meeting Summary**

Tanzania's regional role

Governance, mediation and economic diplomacy

18 May 2023

Roundtable meeting in Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania

Independent thinking since 1920

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Introduction

On 18 May 2023, the Chatham House Africa Programme and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) Tanzania office convened a private roundtable meeting in Arusha. The discussion focused on Tanzania's foreign policy priorities for regional engagement in both Southern and Eastern Africa, including the status of economic integration and trade initiatives, governance and political ties, and collaboration to address peace and security challenges.

The roundtable marked the second event in a project partnership series between KAS and Chatham House on *Tanzania's Foreign Policy Agenda: Economic Diplomacy and International Agency*. The series aims to encourage informed dialogue and debate at an important moment for Tanzania's external engagements: the country's main foreign relations strategy document, the 'New Foreign Policy', was adopted in 2001, but an official review has been commissioned by President Samia Suluhu Hassan and is to take place in 2023.

The first event under this collaboration, a webinar on Tanzanian agency in the international system, was held in November 2022. A summary of that first meeting is available to read.¹ This Arusha roundtable meeting was held under the Chatham House Rule.² The following document summarizes the key findings and themes of the discussion.

Regional integration and governance

Tanzania now faces a significantly different regional institutional landscape to when its existing foreign policy strategy was developed in 2001. The East African Community (EAC) has evolved and expanded since its revival in 1999. With the admission of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 2022, it now comprises seven countries, stretching from the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic; and Tanzania is no longer the only country with joint membership of both the EAC and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The expected further addition of Somalia marks another momentous shift for the EAC. Such changes to the regional institutional calculus must be taken into consideration as part of Tanzania's ongoing foreign policy review process.

Geographically, Tanzania is a highly imposing presence in both the Eastern and Southern Africa regions. Yet roundtable participants noted that it is also often seen by neighbours as the least threatening country in the East Africa region. Tanzania's role in hosting refugees was highlighted as a factor influencing this perception and remains an important and often overlooked factor in regional relations.

¹ Chatham House (2022), 'Tanzanian agency in the international system', Meeting Summary, 24 November 2022, <https://chathamhouse.soutron.net/Portal/Public/en-GB/RecordView/Index/202188>.

² When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed.

Roundtable participants also reflected extensively on the foundations and influence of Tanzania's joint role within the EAC and SADC. Several contributors noted that Tanzania perceives itself to be more engaged on economic issues within the EAC, while interaction with SADC is founded on political ties. Historical factors remain a considerable influence in this respect. Given Tanzania's historical role in supporting and hosting liberation movements across the Southern Africa region, the country's commitment to SADC is based upon a sense of belonging and a level of trust. SADC is the bloc that Tanzania has had the longest continuous affiliation with (when including its predecessor the Southern African Development Coordination Conference). Participants also noted that the initial iteration of the EAC was founded in part due to a vision of Pan-Africanism, and Tanzania did make efforts on this basis to avoid its dissolution in 1977, but that the reconstituted EAC puts a much larger focus on trade relations.

Given the overlapping regional institutions present in Africa, this differing balance of engagement is not unique to Tanzania: Uganda, South Sudan and Kenya follow similar paths with respect to their interaction with the EAC and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). However, Tanzania is set to consider how to balance its overlapping memberships within the foreign policy review.

Human rights and legal frameworks

Tanzania's existing foreign policy strategy lists as one of its core principles the 'defence of freedom, justice, human rights, equality and democracy'. This adds to other institutional commitments made by Tanzania, such as the African Union's (AU) constitutive act, which also includes the principle of 'respect for democratic principles, human rights, the rule of law and good governance'. Roundtable participants queried whether the ongoing foreign policy review would include a focus on justice and human rights, with a more explicit connection to the role of these principles as the basis of development, peace and regional integration – particularly as Tanzania's regional partners emerge from conflict.

The case of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), hosted on Tanzanian soil in Arusha, was deemed by several contributors to be illustrative of this challenge. Tanzania has had the highest number of cases at the ACHPR of any country, and although this figure is likely to be partially inflated in relative terms due to its own role as host, the country's record of implementing the court's rulings was limited and in 2019 the government withdrew the right of Tanzanian citizens and NGOs to file cases against it. President Samia Hassan said in 2022 that the government is willing to work to find ways of overturning the withdrawal, but that the burden of cases would need to be addressed.

This shifting interaction between domestic governance and regional governance initiatives merits further examination during the foreign policy review. It equally has a bearing at the Eastern and Southern Africa regional levels, where

Tanzania's engagement has been uncertain: in 2015, the EAC adopted a protocol extending the East African Court of Justice (EACJ) to handle regional trade, investment and monetary issues – which Tanzania was key to negotiating. However, an extension to cover human rights issues was dropped and Tanzania failed to ratify the protocol under the government of former president John Magufuli, only doing so in November 2022 under President Hassan. Looking to the south, Tanzania's withdrawal in 2014 from the SADC regional tribunal – in a joint move with other member states over issues with a ruling on Zimbabwe – also leaves questions about the deficiency of available recourse for regional dispute resolution and the consistency of this approach with Tanzania's foreign policy principles.

Participants also discussed the extent to which questions of human rights, rule of law and good governance are being factored into the rapidly expanding regional integration agenda. With the EAC at an advanced stage of admitting Somalia to the community, it was questioned whether pure economic interests of expanding market access were dominating over 'softer' issues of justice and human rights. Ultimately, it was noted that Tanzania's integration as part of these regional communities continues to require considerable trust-building and remains a work in progress.

Trade and investment

Tanzania's foreign policy will have an important role to play in helping to achieve the country's economic ambitions, particularly as regional circumstances evolve. By 2030–32, Tanzania is projected to become the largest economy in the East Africa region.³ There is further potential for the country to establish itself as the main entry point for trade flows and investment into the region's central corridor and onwards to Central Africa.

Participants emphasized that the admission of the DRC into the EAC creates a significantly expanded market for the community. Tanzania specifically has opportunities for the export of agro-processed goods such as maize flour and cassava flour, and in financial services, as seen by the granting of a licence for CRDB Bank – already active in Burundi – to operate in the DRC. The experience of Kenya's Equity Bank in expanding its operations to the DRC – with the bank's CEO recently describing the DRC as its most profitable market – is seen by some observers to show the potential of this market access.

Facilitating external investment

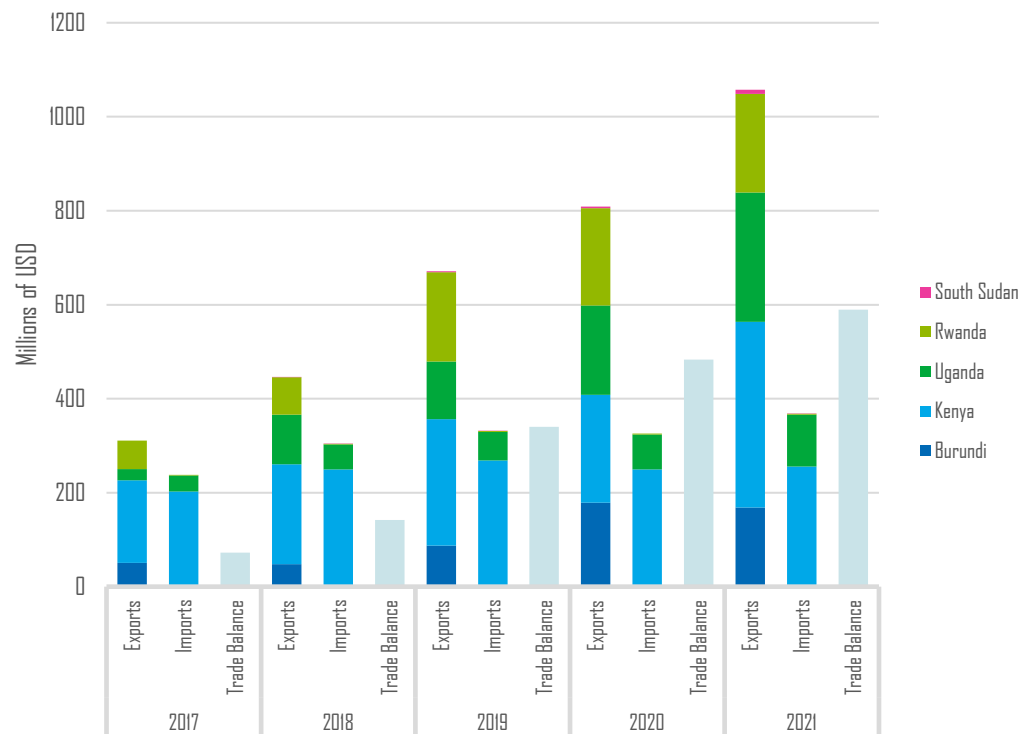
In the context of the shift to economic diplomacy set out in Tanzania's 2001 foreign policy, the roundtable discussion also featured debate on how the Tanzania Investment Centre (TIC) has contributed to this aim. Participants offered differing views on the extent to which the TIC should play a role in facilitating the investment and expansion of Tanzanian companies into the

³ The Citizen (2023), 'Tanzania to overtake Kenya as East Africa's largest economy in 10 years', 16 April 2023, <https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/news/business/tanzania-to-overtake-kenya-as-east-africa-s-largest-economy-in-10-years-4201184>.

wider region. A contrast was drawn with Kenya, which has significant ambitions in this respect: evident in its presence in South Sudan, Uganda and increasingly in the DRC. Participants noted that Tanzania's goal of encouraging external investment was not always clearly stated, and that while Tanzania has become more economically active in the region under the current administration, it is not obvious whether a defined strategy was in place.

On the other hand, it was suggested that Tanzania may not yet have significant regional expansionist ambitions. In this respect, it is important to reflect on the wider context that there are only a small number of countries in Africa with a truly expansionist approach and strategy – most notably South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria. In contrast, Tanzania has only had a truly private sector-led economy for the last 20 to 25 years, and its private sector remains nascent. As such, it may be unreasonable to expect TIC to espouse an expansionist strategy, rather than focusing primarily on attracting investment.

Figure 1. Tanzania's balance of trade with EAC member states, 2017–21



Source: Bank of Tanzania (2022), 'Bank of Tanzania Annual Report 2021/22', December 2022, <https://www.bot.go.tz/Publications/Regular/Annual%20Report/en/2022123017282850.pdf>.

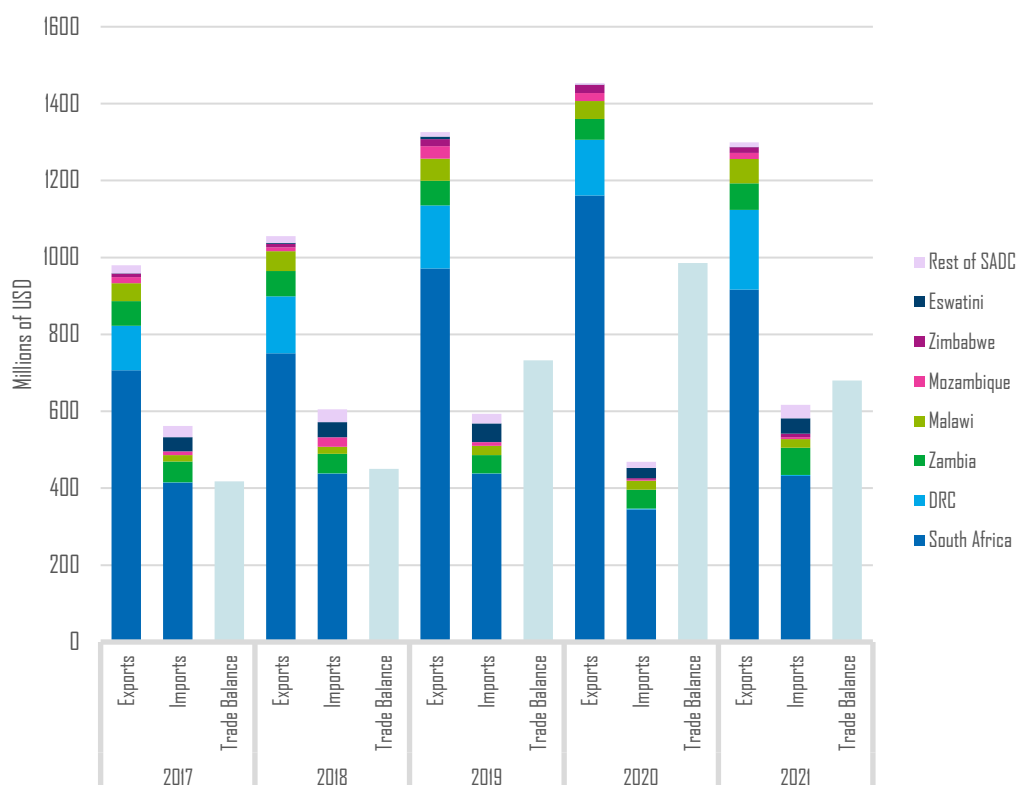
Nonetheless, there are large Tanzanian companies operating in the wider region – examples include Azam, GSM, Oilcom, TAIFA Gas and CRDB Bank. The review of foreign policy should therefore look at what more can be done to facilitate the expansion of these mature companies and create conditions for others to develop through economic diplomacy. This context may call for critical reflection on whether the shift to economic diplomacy in the 2001 New Foreign Policy may have been made too early for Tanzania's economic status at the time.

Regional trade and supply chains

While strides have been made in terms of trade liberalization, trade relations remain an area of competition and tension in Tanzania's foreign policy. Notable trade disputes have emerged in recent years, including with Kenya in 2022 over standards imposed on maize flour exports to the Kenyan market.

Participants highlighted Tanzania's agricultural sector as an area of competitive advantage in the pursuit of providing consistent food supplies to the wider region. Yet it is also important to note that the dynamics of this trade are progressing in different ways. Increasingly, Tanzania is exporting processed goods, not raw agricultural produce or other basic commodities. Although within the EAC market there does still remain a strong emphasis on exporting unprocessed agricultural goods, Tanzania's exports to the SADC region have increased quickly and evolved to increasingly incorporate value-added supplies. In 2020, Tanzania's trade surplus with SADC countries grew to almost \$1 billion, from \$400–450 million in 2017 and 2018.⁴ The products leading this surplus are gold, cigarettes, wheat flour, juice, ceramic, fish, glass, cement, soap and footwear – thereby not only raw materials. Exports to Malawi and Zambia in particular were highlighted as especially critical for those two countries.

Figure 2. Tanzania's trade with SADC member states, 2017-2021



Source: Bank of Tanzania (2022), 'Bank of Tanzania Annual Report 2021/22'.

⁴ The Citizen (2022) 'Tanzania's trade surplus across East Africa rose to \$484 million', 9 January 2022, <https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/tanzania/news/business/dar-s-eac-trade-surplus-485m-less-half-sadc-volumes-3677302>.

Overall, therefore, it is important to recognize how the structure of the Tanzanian economy has changed and what this means for trade relations. The contribution of agriculture to the Tanzanian economy has dropped from 49 per cent of GDP to 26 per cent of GDP, and it is still decreasing. In this context, Tanzania may wish to push for the revival of discussions on regional value chain strategies in both SADC and EAC forums.

Trade initiatives: COMESA withdrawal and the AFCFTA

Roundtable participants also discussed the significance of Tanzania's withdrawal from the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) in 2000 – a move which can be attributed to a convergence of national interest and contextual factors. The reformulation of the EAC in 1999, just five years after the establishment of COMESA, left Tanzania with concerns about how to balance its different commitments at a time when the liberalization of its economy was still in its relatively early stages. This added to fears that Tanzania could lose up to \$80 million annually from tariffs on imports if it was to fully comply.

Over two decades later, and with the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AFCFTA) and its ratification by Tanzania in 2021, the COMESA withdrawal may be less relevant. Tanzania's economy is much more advanced and prepared than in 2000 to take advantage of the larger AFCFTA market, an opportunity that should be at the forefront of trade and economic considerations within the foreign policy review.

Peace and security

Tanzania's efforts to address conflict and instability within its region are increasingly borne out of an awareness of the potential for neighbouring insecurity to negatively affect prospects for infrastructure development, trade, investment and tourism.

Participants highlighted several defining features and historical factors that influence Tanzania's approach. Firstly, Tanzania has a high bar for participation in regional security interventions, based on the likely outcome of the intervention. Without a high degree of certainty that its intervention will lead to the total resolution of conflict and will not bring additional risks to its own interests, Tanzania has tended to be hesitant to become directly involved in conflict situations. As demonstrated by the country's reluctance to join the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) in 2007. Secondly, Tanzania's military academy has helped to develop several militaries within the wider region, leading to a symbiotic relationship and providing Tanzania with a strategic edge. Finally, Tanzania has previously quietly supported a number of regional initiatives without direct involvement, including the SADC interventions in Lesotho and the DRC in 1998, as well as hosting mediation for Burundi, Rwanda and Ethiopia and supporting the Burundi inter-dialogue process from 2016, facilitated by former Tanzanian president Benjamin Mkapa.

Eastern DRC and the EAC Regional Force

The conflict in Eastern DRC is currently dominating the regional peace and security agenda. Tanzania was not initially part of the EAC-led Nairobi Process when it was initiated in April 2022, out of a desire for total consistency with its existing commitments under SADC. Tanzania joined the third conclave in June 2022, and formally became part of the Nairobi Process only when the DRC was officially integrated into the EAC in July 2022.

Tanzania has stressed that its existing commitments – which include a contingent within the UN peacekeeping mission in DRC (MONUSCO) – would not allow it to contribute forces to the EAC Regional Force, but instead has offered financial contributions and technical support behind the scenes. When the chiefs of EAC defence forces met in Bujumbura in October 2022, they requested Tanzania as a neutral party to provide a senior officer to be based at the EAC secretariat, to support the linkages between the regional force, office of the facilitator, and partner troop contributor countries at Tanzania's own cost. Such commitments have not always been made explicit to the public, but point to Tanzania's desire to leverage its regional status without compromising existing relationships.

SADC is now entering the picture in Eastern DRC, out of a desire to bridge the gap where the EAC Regional Force has not been able to carry out enforcement measures and MONUSCO's effectiveness has not been felt. Roundtable contributors argued that Tanzania has a unique role in this process through the linkages of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR),⁵ EAC and SADC to create an optimal mix of political and security interventions.

Responding to insecurity in Mozambique

Peace and security relations between Tanzania and Mozambique have varied within the last decade. Participants highlighted moments of tension, including Tanzania's deployment of forces at its border and refusal to accept refugees from northern Mozambique because of its perception of an incoming terrorist threat. It was noted that as the insurgency in Cabo Delgado intensified, Mozambique's President Nyusi travelled to Dar es Salaam in January 2021 to ask then-President Magufuli for support, but was not provided with any signal of intent. This approach would later shift under President Samia Hassan, with Tanzania contributing to the SADC Mission in Mozambique in August 2021. Participants noted that Tanzania and Mozambique continue to share strong ties, in part due to historical support for liberation, and that counterterrorism issues would demand a long-term regional approach not only from both countries but also DRC and Somalia. As Tanzania's foreign policy review takes shape alongside the EAC expansion to include both DRC and Somalia, counterterrorism is one potential area where an expanded community may help with communication and coordination.

⁵ Roundtable contributors highlighted that Tanzania was at the forefront of negotiations for the 2004 Dar es Salaam declaration, which gave way to the 2006 establishment of the ICGLR. Tanzania was heavily invested in the organization's success and active leadership through Ambassador Liberata Mulamula, as the organization's first executive secretary.

Conclusion: Implications for Tanzania's foreign policy agenda

The roundtable deliberations showcased that Tanzania's regional foreign policy approach, while deeply rooted in historical background, has also been buffeted by major policy shifts in recent years. Notably, under the Magufuli administration between 2015 and 2021 there was a move to an inward-looking approach that led to faltering implementation of regional relationships. More generally, Tanzania has sometimes been accused of being half-hearted and reluctant to fully involve itself in regional initiatives for integration or conflict intervention.

Despite this, participants acknowledged clear efforts by the current administration to reverse this trend of disengagement. It was highlighted that Tanzania is still regaining the trust that was lost during its inward-facing period, and that this is a process that takes far more time to rebuild than to lose. Ultimately, Tanzania's regional role is likely to remain one of caution – to advise rather than interfere – but there remain significant opportunities for a foreign policy review to consolidate this re-engagement process and leverage both Tanzania's potential and past experience.

Acknowledgments

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