

Call for papers

For a special issue of the scientific quarterly, *Afrique Contemporaine*

A great Eastern Africa in the making?

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If we step away from the old British Colonial definition of East Africa and look at the economic and political forces shaping and redrawing the region today, we see a multifaceted region – one long perceived as a patchwork of extremely different economic and political systems. The divergent development paths taken by Tanzania and Kenya in the 1960s and 1970s – one socialist and self-reliant, the other capitalist and open to foreign investment – illustrate each country's autonomous political and economic choices, solidly grounded in the process of building national sovereignty rather than regional cohesion. Three phenomena have precluded any enduring form of economic or political regionalism: authoritarian regimes installed in many countries from the Red Sea to southern Africa and to the Great Lakes Region; the civil and interstate wars that have torn apart several countries (and continue to do so, in some cases); and the slow disintegration of some states. The failure of the first East African Community proved how difficult it is to achieve regional cooperation and especially regional integration in the face of sovereign tensions, economic differences, and armed destabilization efforts. Despite a long history of interconnectedness through movement and trade between the social and cultural centers of greater East Africa (the Great Lakes Region, Swahili Coast, the Horn of Africa, and ethnicized hinterlands), identity politics, economic hierarchies, and curbs on the circulation of goods, peoples, and ideas have intensified during the colonial and postcolonial period.

In recent years, however, the situation has changed. We see new approaches and experiences that reveal growing interconnections between state and non-state actors in the greater East Africa taking shape today. The wave of structural adjustments unleashed in the middle of the 1980s

effectively ended the separation between socialist and capitalist economies. It also brought about instances of regional cooperation in many sectors, without loss of national sovereignty. These experiences resulted from harmonizing policies, aimed at both fiscal and judicial regimes and commercial and insurance regulations. Renewed efforts to build integrated blocs have facilitated trade in goods and capital; such integration rests on common economic policies, reduced tariffs, and the promotion of inter-regional commerce. Examples include the East African Community, the South African Development Community, and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa. Private actors, such as multinationals, smaller companies, and tradesmen working in various fields (such as telecommunications, banking, automobile re-exporting, mechanical engineering, and consumer goods) serve as agents in this expansion through interconnection. Despite new forms of authoritarianism, the stabilization of post-conflict countries, such as Burundi, Mozambique, Rwanda, and Uganda, has eased the circulation of goods and peoples in the vast East African hinterlands. It also makes possible the expansion of large infrastructure projects between countries in the region, including Ethiopia and South Sudan, along with the construction of region-wide railways, telecommunications networks, roadways, pipelines, and power lines.

However, several challenges undermine the optimism driving these grand interconnection projects. The infrastructure aims to improve economies of scale in the region and augment its attractiveness for foreign investment – both from historically favored countries and regions (the United States, Great Britain and Europe) and from emerging countries, primarily China and India, but also Indonesia and Turkey. These ambitions face obstacles in three major regions. First, in the Great Lakes Region, lawlessness, particularly around North Kivu Province in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, threatens the stability of Burundi and Uganda while authoritarianism in Rwanda, a country ruled by an iron fist, makes internal or external compromise nearly impossible. Second, South Sudan possesses oil resources coveted by other countries in the region, principally Ethiopia, Sudan, and Kenya – the latter two still torn by internal wars. Third, Somalia — a state without a government — harbors thousands of refugees and destabilizes the entire region with terrorist activities; this especially affects Kenya, the economic engine of East Africa.

This special issue aims to highlight the economic, political and social forces that make this new interconnectedness possible, now and in the future – forces that it has and will, in turn, transform, leading to major political and economic realignments in the entire region. This issue also aims to document and analyze those realignments. We welcome the following topics as potential submissions. (Please note that this list is by no means exclusive, and other topics will be considered.)

(1) Infrastructure and development. The new interconnections developing in East Africa allow the circulation of ideas, practices, goods, capital, men and women. However, current debates and projects mostly focus on infrastructure: railways, telecommunications, roads, pipelines, power grids, and so forth. This border-crossing infrastructure often takes the form of “corridors” – a recurrent term in East African project documents, and one often used by analysts and scholars. Under this heading, the proposed volume will examine the new rhetoric promoting interconnectedness through these multifunctional corridors. They are conceived as a panacea for opening the hinterland to the Indian Ocean, facilitating cross-border trade, and creating new development links in what have been peripheral areas — for example, the Lamu Port Southern Sudan-Ethiopia Transport (LAPSSET) Corridor project in northern Kenya. What means do proponents employ – economic calculations, models, etc. – to legitimize such interconnection projects? How does the corridor or an infrastructure connection co-exist with new state-sponsored development projects, particularly poverty alleviation efforts? How does each governmental stakeholder instrumentalize the corridor internally? Is it possible to build nationhood through a regionalized transnational project? We note that corridors have a history in the region, and would welcome a retrospective analysis of such projects. As for natural resources, we hope to examine possible links between planned infrastructure projects and looting by certain actors; we would also question when and how such infrastructure might truly benefit local populations, as national development plans claim. We would also question the relationship that may be built between regional interconnections through corridors and regional construction. In official rhetoric, the corridor symbolizes material efforts to forge relationships between countries. However, this rhetoric seldom addresses the political integration needed if the corridor is to sustain its intended financial and economic relationships. Nor does such rhetoric address asymmetries in corridor control and profit accumulation.

(2) Funding and international cooperation. The financing of infrastructure is key to the physical and geographical interconnections between countries in greater East Africa; it is, therefore, a crucial condition for the expansion of human, capital, goods and resource flows. This observation calls for an examination of present and future funding modalities and mechanisms, given that new public- and private-sector donors (particularly those from emerging countries, principally China and India, and some Gulf countries for certain sectors) will contribute to changing international relations in general and the development finance landscape in particular. Observers expect that the primacy of bilateral aid will return, after decades in the shadow of foreign aid from international and regional organizations and public-private partnerships. As traditional donors reposition themselves, particularly the World Bank and OECD countries, what consequences will follow? How will East African countries change the way they negotiate at the national level, or at the level of the economic and political blocs now being formed, when addressing donor countries having only weak conditionalities? How will countries with varied human and natural resources or expertise succeed – or not – in cooperating with development partners, given that those whose reserves have recently proven greater than expected (Kenya and Uganda for oil, or Mozambique and Tanzania for natural gas) will attract more attention than their less-well-endowed neighbors? Will natural resource exploitation influence regional cooperation organizations? To what extent will the West participate in the region's latest social and economic development phase?

(3) Political realignments. Economic globalization drives interconnections in East Africa, whose countries must cope with its effects even as their political and economic choices encourage it. Most of these countries have converted to multiparty democracy (albeit with uneven levels of democratization) and several have ratified new constitutions; all of them must juggle their nascent concepts of nationhood with their regional bilateral and multilateral networks. The equation between nation and region, or between local, regional and international, often proves unequal. We would ask how various political actors appropriate interconnection projects (or fail to do so), and how the private sector, civil society, and international partners position themselves in the landscape. The relationship that emerges between political, economic and financial actors in the face of this new interconnectedness calls for an analysis to understand

how project outcomes depend on that relationship, particularly given the obvious overlap between actors. We would emphasize the role of political entrepreneurs and political élites in these countries (heads of state and powerful officials) by using a sociology of actors and a sociology of inter-state relations. The issue of national elections crucially informs the fate of such projects, as Kenya's latest elections demonstrated. The political realignments that the new connections simultaneously serve and perform only become visible at the national scale; these realignments affect relationships between countries and can lead to conflicts — over 'vertical exploitation' practices, over constraints that interdependences impose, or over questions of market monopolies and economic rents.

(4) Security. According to surveys, most citizens in East African countries name security as their primary concern. Security or its absence reflect many actors and actions: the state's public policies and its authoritarian, policing and/or criminal practices; the presence of neighborhood or election-period militias; the activities of international terrorism, primarily from Somalia. Current infrastructure projects for interconnectedness depend heavily on securing areas of building and operation, as in the LAPSSET corridor. How do security concerns affect project design and funding choices? How do countries try to protect themselves from various kind of insecurity? Some threats may be local, national or regional, but all overlap; increasingly, they cross borders, as when Somali terrorists insinuate themselves among a target country's young adults. What specific systems — resource redistribution, national or regional security measures for example — will foster peace between countries, thereby allowing interconnections and even regional integration to flourish? And how can these systems work, given that some governments covertly profit from terrorism, increasing criminal activities such as drugs and arms trafficking or organized crime? And finally, how does security affect human mobility, so vital to the flows of goods and capital? Some migrate voluntarily for short-term or permanent work while others have suffered forced displacements; how does mobility function when some countries in the region must handle thousands of internal and international refugees?

Timeline:

This special issues has the following timeline (subject to change):

- Interested authors will submit a one-page précis, describing the topic, argument outline (in brief), and the relevant data or fieldwork; submissions are due by 20 November 2014
- The editors will select article topics and authors by 30 November 2014
- Selected authors must submit a first draft of their articles by 30 March 2015
- The special issue will be published in the third quarter of 2015.

In their published versions, the articles will be 50,000 characters in length, including spaces, footnotes and bibliography. Each article will be blind peer-reviewed by two experts in the material.

Please submit your response to this call for papers via our online Editorial Manager:

<http://www.editorialmanager.com/afriquecontemporaine/>

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Indicative bibliography

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3/ Political realignments:

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