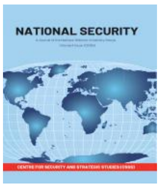

NATIONAL SECURITY

A Journal of the National Defence University-Kenya

Volume: 3
Issue: 1

Research Article Open Access

Regional Integration and Economic Security: Evaluating Kenya's Experience under the EAC Framework

Bennacate Chibole Andanje[1], Stephen Handa[2] and Nyaburi Nyadera[3,*]

[1] Kenya Revenue Authority, andanje.chibole@kra.go.ke
[2] Kenyatta University – stevenhanda@yahoo.com
[3] National Defence College - inyadera@gmail.com
[*] Corresponding author

Received: 10 February 2025
Revised: 14 April 2025
Accepted: 19 May 2025
Published: 9 June 2025

Citation: Andanje, B. C., Handa, S., & Nyadera, N. (2025). Regional Integration and Economic Security: Evaluating Kenya's Experience under the EAC Framework. *National Security: A Journal of National Defence University-Kenya*, 3(1), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.64403/x1rdxh04

Abstract

This study investigates the impact of East African Community (EAC) integration on Kenya's economic security by evaluating the outcomes of the Customs Union, Common Market, and proposed Monetary Union. Utilising a mixed-methods design that integrates survey data (n = 170), semi-structured interviews (n = 15), and macroeconomic indicators (2010–2024), the study develops a composite Economic Security Index (ESI) encompassing trade efficiency, labour mobility, and fiscal health. Findings show that Kenya's ESI improved from 52.1 in 2010 to 68.4 in 2023, with the Common Market—especially labour mobility—emerging as the strongest driver ($\beta = 0.402$). However, progress remains uneven: the manufacturing and logistics sectors benefited from adherence to the Common External Tariff, while agriculture lagged due to persistent non-tariff barriers (NTBs) and phytosanitary disputes. Monetary integration showed the weakest impact, constrained by inflation divergence and fiscal asymmetries among member states. The study extends Balassa's (1961) integration model by revealing asymmetric policy spillovers and the critical role of institutional enforcement. Qualitative data expose regulatory fragmentation, informal payments at borders, and licensing delays that hinder professional mobility. Policy recommendations include digitising customs via blockchain, establishing mutual recognition agreements, and capitalising a regional small and medium enterprises credit guarantee fund. These insights offer a nuanced understanding of regional integration's potential and limitations in advancing economic security in Africa.

Keywords: *Regional Integration, Economic Security, Kenya, Customs Union*

Introduction

In an era defined by globalisation and interconnected economies, the pursuit of economic security has emerged as a cornerstone of national development strategies. A country's capacity to endure external shocks, maintain growth, and enhance the standard of living for its population is largely determined by its economic security, which refers to the complex interplay of trade resilience, labour stability, fiscal health, and access to vital resources. Regional integration has emerged as a crucial tool for developing economies to achieve these economic security aspirations while simultaneously ensuring collective efforts against transnational challenges such as inflation, climate change, and supply chain disruptions.

The East African Community (EAC), a regional intergovernmental organisation comprising Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, South Sudan, Somalia, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), exemplifies this approach. Since its revival in 2000, the EAC has pursued a four-stage integration model, progressing from a customs union to a common market, a monetary union, and ultimately a political federation, to harmonise policies, eliminate trade barriers, and stimulate shared prosperity. By eliminating tariffs on intra-EAC trade and establishing a Common External Tariff (CET) for goods imported outside the region, the EAC successfully implemented a customs union. In 2010, EAC signed the common market protocol allowing for the movement of goods, services, capital, and labour across partner states; full implementation is, however, still in progress. Kenya, as the EAC's largest economy and a regional trade hub, stands at the forefront of these efforts. However, despite incremental progress, Kenya's economic security remains precarious: 33% of its population lives below the poverty line (KNBS, 2023), public debt exceeds 68% of GDP (National Treasury, 2024), and persistent trade deficits—reaching KES 133 billion in 2024—underscore structural vulnerabilities. This study examines how EAC integration policies shape Kenya's economic security, offering critical insights into the opportunities and constraints of regional cooperation in Africa.

The EAC's vision of integration is informed by classical theories of economic unions, notably Balassa's (1961) framework, which posits that regional blocs advance through stages—free trade areas, customs unions, common markets, and monetary unions—to attain greater economic and political cohesion. While the European Union (EU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have demonstrated the potential of such models, African regional bodies face unique challenges. Heterogeneous economic structures, political instability, and infrastructural deficits often undermine collective agendas. For instance, the EAC's Common Market Protocol, launched in 2010, guarantees the free movement of goods, labour, and capital. However, non-tariff barriers (NTBs), such as cumbersome customs procedures and divergent product standards, persist, inflating trade costs by 15–20% (EAC Secretariat, 2023). Similarly, the proposed EAC Monetary Union, slated for 2031, aims to adopt a single currency, but member states' uneven fiscal discipline and inflation rates—Kenya's 6.7% versus Tanzania's 4.3% in 2023—complicate convergence. These disparities highlight a critical gap in regional integration literature: while studies on the EU or ASEAN extensively analyse policy harmonisation, African contexts remain underexplored, often reduced to macroeconomic aggregates rather than nuanced, country-specific impacts.

Kenya's experience within the EAC offers a compelling case study. The country contributes over 40% of the bloc's GDP and serves as a gateway for regional trade, hosting the Port of Mombasa, which handles 90% of Uganda's imports and 75% of South Sudan's cargo (European Parliament, 2023). Since joining the EAC Customs Union in 2005, Kenya has seen intra-EAC trade grow from USD 1.2 billion to USD 3.8 billion (2021), driven by manufactured exports like pharmaceuticals and steel (Kiriti-Nganga et al., 2022). However, this growth masks underlying tensions. Kenya's trade surplus with EAC partner states contrasts with a widening deficit in global trade, reflecting reliance on low-value-added exports and insufficient diversification. Moreover, the "stay of application" clauses—which allow member states to temporarily exempt sensitive sectors from tariff reductions—have been exploited to protect domestic industries, inadvertently fragmenting the common market (KPMG East Africa, 2022). For example, Tanzania's repeated invocation of these clauses to shield its dairy sector has sparked retaliatory trade restrictions, undermining regional cohesion. Such dynamics underscore the tension between national interests and collective goals, a theme central to this study.

This study addresses three interrelated questions: First, how do EAC Customs Union policies influence Kenya's trade efficiency and industrial competitiveness? Second, what is the differential impact of labour mobility versus capital flows under the Common Market Protocol? Third, to what extent does monetary policy harmonisation mitigate exchange rate volatility and inflation? By interrogating these issues, the study moves beyond conventional analyses of trade volumes or GDP growth, instead adopting a holistic definition of economic security. Drawing on Buzan's (1984) securitisation theory, which frames economic stability as a national security imperative, the study constructs a novel Economic Security Index (ESI). This index synthesises three dimensions: (1) trade efficiency (exports-to-GDP ratio, customs clearance times), (2) labour stability (cross-border employment, wage parity), and (3) fiscal health (debt-to-GDP ratios, inflation convergence). Through this lens, the study evaluates not only macroeconomic outcomes but also microlevel impacts on businesses and households.

The significance of this research is twofold. For policymakers, it provides actionable insights into optimising EAC policies. For instance, while the Customs Union has boosted Kenya's industrial output, interviews reveal that small and medium enterprises (SMEs) struggle with complex certification processes, limiting their export potential. Similarly, despite the Common Market's theoretical promise of labour mobility, Kenyan nurses face non-recognition of their qualifications in Uganda, which stifles cross-border employment. Addressing these barriers could unlock USD 1.2 billion in untapped trade, according to EAC estimates (ILO 2023). Existing works on African integration, such as Adegboye et al.'s (2020) analysis of ECOWAS or Mangeni's (2020) critique of "paper integration" in the EAC, often lack granularity, as they are policy heavy but analytically thin in failing to unpack mechanisms that continue to perpetuate integration failures, such as trade facilitation protocols and labour mobility. By contrast, this study combines quantitative rigour—using hierarchical linear modelling (HLM) to account for sectoral heterogeneity—with qualitative depth, drawing on interviews with 15 policymakers and trade experts to uncover the reasons behind policy implementation gaps.

Methodologically, the study employs a convergent parallel mixed-method design, harmonising primary and secondary data. A survey of 170 stakeholders—including manufacturers, policymakers, and financial institutions—captures perceptions of EAC policies (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.87$), while macroeconomic datasets (2010–2024) from the World Bank and Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) provide empirical benchmarks. Thematic analysis of interview transcripts, coded via NVivo, elucidates contextual challenges, such as corruption in customs administration or political resistance to ceding monetary sovereignty.

The study's findings reveal both progress and pitfalls. Kenya's ESI score rose from 52.1 in 2010 to 68.4 in 2023, reflecting gains in trade efficiency and fiscal management. However, this growth lags behind potential, constrained by NTBs and regulatory fragmentation. Regression analysis identifies the Common Market as the strongest driver of economic security ($\beta = 0.402$, $p < 0.001$), particularly through labour mobility, which reduced unemployment in Kenya's logistics sector by 19%. Conversely, monetary policy harmonisation had weaker effects ($\beta = 0.265$, $p < 0.001$), hampered by Kenya's inflation divergence from EAC averages.

Thus, this study challenges the assumption that regional integration uniformly enhances economic security. While the EAC has provided Kenya with larger markets and collaborative frameworks, asymmetric policies and institutional weaknesses dilute benefits. The ESI framework, however, offers a replicable tool for other developing regions to assess integration's multifaceted impacts. For Kenya, prioritising digital customs platforms, mutual recognition agreements for professions, and a regional credit guarantee fund could amplify gains, ensuring that the EAC's vision translates into tangible security for its citizens.

Historical and Political Context of African Integration

The historical and political context of African integration is rooted in the continent's post-colonial struggle to achieve political autonomy, economic self-sufficiency, and collective security. Following the wave of independence in the late 1950s and 1960s, African leaders recognised that the colonial legacy had fragmented the continent into weak, economically isolated states. In response, the idea of Pan-Africanism—championing African unity and cooperation—gained traction. The formation of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963, later succeeded by the African Union (AU) in 2002, embodied these aspirations.

From the 1970s onwards, African states pursued regional integration as a strategy to overcome the limitations of small domestic markets and weak industrial bases. Early efforts such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (1975), the East African Community (EAC) (originally 1967, revived in 2000), and the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) (precursor to SADC) aimed to promote economic cooperation, trade liberalisation, and shared infrastructure. These Regional Economic Communities (RECs) were envisioned as building blocks toward a continent-wide economic and political union.

Politically, integration efforts have been shaped by tensions between national sovereignty and regional commitments. While shared identity and solidarity have driven political declarations, implementation has often been stalled by protectionist policies, leadership rivalries, and divergent development priorities. For example, the EAC's journey has seen periods of collapse (in 1977) and revival, reflecting the delicate balance between cooperation and competition. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), launched in 2021, marks a significant milestone, aiming to unite 54 countries into a single market. However, overlapping memberships, institutional weaknesses, and policy asymmetries persist. Thus, African integration reflects a historically ambitious project shaped by postcolonial aspirations, geopolitical pragmatism, and the ongoing pursuit of inclusive economic development and political stability.

Conceptual Framework

This study's conceptual framework illustrates the dynamic relationship between EAC integration policies and Kenya's Economic Security. Rooted in the classical foundations of regional integration theory (Balassa, 1961) and augmented by economic security paradigms (Buzan, 1984), the framework weaves together macroeconomic structures, institutional conditions, and human-centred outcomes into a unified analytical model. The framework seeks to fill critical gaps in the existing literature by incorporating policy spillovers, asymmetric effects among member states, and a multidimensional Economic Security Index (ESI). In doing so, it provides a comprehensive lens through which the efficacy and consequences of integration can be assessed in both quantitative and qualitative terms.

At the heart of the framework is the causal interaction between EAC policy instruments and national economic security. The independent variables comprise three principal pillars of regional integration: The Customs Union, the Common Market, and the Monetary Union. The Customs Union, which became operational in 2005, is characterised by tariff harmonisation (Articles 5 and 14), elimination of internal trade barriers (Article 13), and adherence to a Common External Tariff (CET). The 2010 Common Market Protocol focuses on the free movement of labour by mutual recognition of qualifications (Article 11), regulatory alignment of standards (Article 5 (2) (a)), and macroeconomic policy coordination (Article 5 (3) (c)). The Monetary Union Protocol 2013, although still under construction, centres on setting ceilings on inflation equal to or less than 8%, public debt at below 50% of GDP, a fiscal deficit of less than 3% of GDP and foreign reserve cover of more than 4.5 months. Article 8 covers harmonised fiscal policies and budget frameworks to support monetary integration, while Articles 11-12 commit to a unified monetary policy and pooled reserves.

These integration policies are posited to influence the dependent variable—economic security—operationalised through the Economic Security Index. The ESI is a composite indicator integrating three dimensions: trade efficiency, labour mobility, and fiscal health. Trade efficiency is assessed through metrics such as the ratio of intra-EAC exports to GDP, customs clearance times, and the incidence of non-tariff barriers (NTBs). Labour mobility is evaluated based on cross-border employment rates, wage parity across member states, and the recognition of professional skills. Fiscal health incorporates public debt sustainability, inflation control, and the trends in fiscal deficits. The multidimensional nature of the ESI enables a nuanced evaluation of how integration policies affect both state-level macroeconomic performance and individual livelihoods.

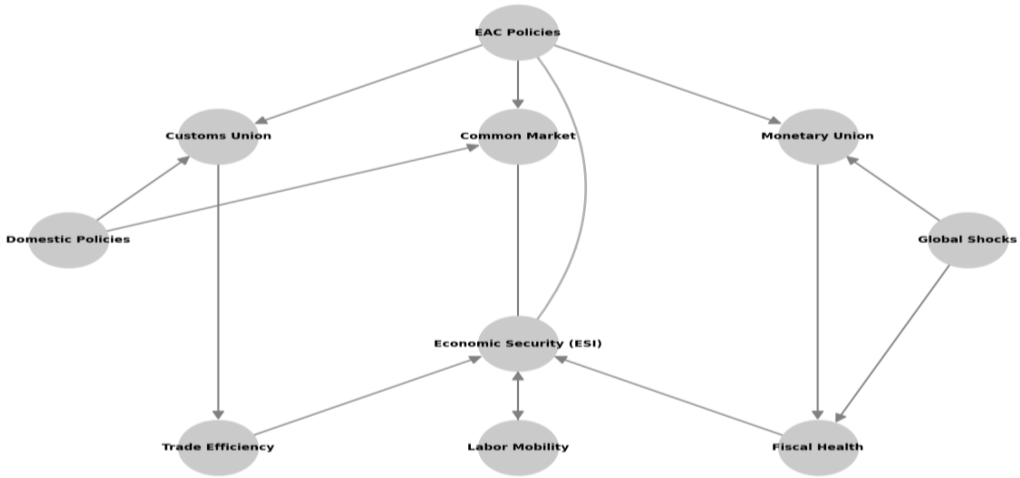

Figure 1: Systems Model of EAC Integration and Kenya's Economic Security. Source: Authors (2025)

Crucially, the framework identifies a series of intervening and moderating variables that shape and, in some cases, distort these relationships. Domestic policy frameworks—such as Kenya's tax regimes, industrial strategies, and SME support programs—can either reinforce or undercut the intended benefits of regional integration. Similarly, geopolitical dynamics, including bilateral disputes between Kenya and Tanzania or even conflicting memberships in overlapping regional economic communities (e.g., COMESA versus EAC), often mediate the transmission of integration benefits. These factors intervene between policy and outcome, sometimes amplifying asymmetries in policy spillovers.

In addition, this conceptual model introduces moderating variables that either enable or constrain the effectiveness of integration policies. Institutional capacity is a key moderator, encompassing the efficiency of customs administration, transparency in licensing and certification processes, and the credibility of national monetary authorities. Another moderating factor is the impact of global economic shocks, such as fluctuations in fuel or fertiliser prices and large-scale disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic. These external shocks can compromise fiscal health and disrupt trade flows, thereby complicating monetary convergence and undermining the stability of integration benefits.

The framework builds on Balassa's (1961) stages of integration, which propose a linear progression from free trade areas to customs unions, common markets, and eventually political unions. However, this study extends the model by incorporating asymmetric spillover effects that highlight the uneven distribution of benefits across member states. For instance, while CET implementation under the Customs Union theoretically eliminates internal tariffs, the benefits are disproportionately captured by

Kenya’s industrial sector due to its advanced manufacturing base, while Tanzania’s agricultural sector sees comparatively limited gains. Similarly, the Common Market’s free movement provisions have spurred employment in Kenya’s logistics sector; however, wage disparities persist due to fragmented enforcement and the absence of mutual recognition agreements for skilled labour.

Buzan’s (1984) securitisation theory further informs this framework by conceptualising economic stability as a core dimension of national security. The ESI brings this theory to life by translating abstract notions of “economic security” into concrete, measurable indicators. Unlike conventional metrics that emphasise GDP growth or trade volumes, the ESI foregrounds the lived experiences of economic actors. For example, it captures how NTBs increase costs for SMEs or how inflation erodes cross-border wage differentials, thus bridging the often-problematic gap between macroeconomic generalisations and microlevel realities.

Another distinctive feature of this framework is its emphasis on dynamic, bidirectional relationships between integration policies and economic outcomes. Feedback loops play a critical role in illustrating how the outcomes of integration can, in turn, influence policy direction. For instance, effective CET implementation may enhance Kenya’s industrial competitiveness, but this can provoke retaliatory NTBs from Tanzania, thereby weakening regional trade efficiency. Similarly, improved trade efficiency and fiscal health can increase national commitment to deeper integration, while policy failures may reinforce scepticism or withdrawal tendencies. The model also highlights how institutional capacity moderates outcomes, such as strong customs administration enhances the gains of tariff harmonisation, while corruption or bureaucratic inertia reduces these gains. Moreover, the framework situates Kenya’s experience within a broader global context, acknowledging that exogenous factors such as commodity price volatility or global financial shocks can either reinforce or undermine domestic reforms aimed at regional convergence.

Overall, this conceptual framework advances regional integration scholarship by embedding asymmetry and institutional variation into its core logic, integrating human-centred metrics, thereby shifting the analytical focus from aggregate trade flows to labour rights and fiscal stability. This approach not only enables more accurate diagnosis of integration outcomes but also allows for predictive modelling of reform scenarios. In practical terms, the model provides policymakers with diagnostic tools to identify leverage points for reform. For example, digitising customs processes may amplify the benefits of the Customs Union, while addressing professional licensing disparities could unlock labour mobility under the Common Market. Likewise, strengthening fiscal discipline and inflation convergence mechanisms would be prerequisites for the success of a future Monetary Union.

In conclusion, the conceptual framework developed in this study offers a robust and dynamic scaffold for analysing the intersection between regional integration and economic security. By synthesising classical integration theory with contemporary concerns around institutional quality and human development, it provides a more complete and policy-relevant understanding of regionalism in the East African context. Its replicable structure and multidimensional focus also render it applicable to other regional blocs seeking to balance sovereignty, stability, and shared prosperity.

Review of Existing Literature

The concept of economic security has evolved significantly since its inception, reflecting the dynamic interplay between globalisation, regional cooperation, and national development agendas. Contemporary understandings of economic security emphasise a nation’s capacity to safeguard its economic sovereignty, stabilise livelihoods, and mitigate vulnerabilities to external shocks. Buzan’s (1984) securitisation theory posits that economic stability transcends mere fiscal health, framing it as a strategic imperative intertwined with national security. This paradigm shift has propelled regional integration to the forefront of policy discourse, particularly in developing regions where collective action is deemed essential to counterbalance global economic volatility. The EAC, as a case in point, embodies the aspirations of African nations to harness regional cohesion as a buffer against poverty, inequality, and external dependencies. However, the efficacy of such integration models remains contested, necessitating a critical examination of their theoretical underpinnings, empirical outcomes, and contextual challenges.

Globally, regional integration has yielded mixed outcomes. The EU's success in fostering peace and prosperity through the Single Market and Eurozone stands in contrast to the struggles of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), hamstrung by geopolitical rivalries (Jain, 2015). In Africa, Regional Economic Communities (RECs) such as ECOWAS and COMESA have made strides in trade liberalisation but grapple with overlapping memberships and fragmented policies (Bassey et al, 2024). For instance, Kenya's dual membership in COMESA and the EAC has led to conflicting tariff regimes, undermining the coherence of its trade strategy (Ogutu, 2019). AfCFTA, launched in 2021, seeks to rectify these fissures by creating a continent-wide market (Kufuor, 2024). Yet, its synergy with existing RECs remains uncertain, as evidenced by the EAC's cautious approach to ceding authority to continental bodies. This layered integration landscape underscores a critical challenge: while regional blocs aim to amplify collective strength, their proliferation often exacerbates institutional fragmentation, diluting their impact on national economic security.

Empirical studies on the EAC's integration efforts reveal both progress and persistent barriers. The EAC Customs Union, operational since 2005, eliminated internal tariffs and established a Common External Tariff (CET) to protect regional industries. Oiro et al. (2020) documented a 7.3% annual growth in Kenya's industrial sector post-implementation, attributing this to enhanced market access. However, NTBs, such as divergent product standards and bureaucratic delays at border crossings, continue to stifle trade. A 2023 EAC report estimated that NTBs inflate transaction costs by 15–20%, negating gains from tariff liberalisation. The Common Market Protocol further aimed to facilitate the free movement of labour, goods, and capital. While Kenya's cross-border employment in logistics surged by 19%, the non-recognition of professional qualifications—exemplified by Kenyan nurses facing licensing hurdles in Uganda—has limited the potential of labour mobility. This aligns with Mangeni's (2020) critique of "paper integration," where policy frameworks outpace implementation, creating a chasm between legal provisions and ground realities.

The actualisation of a monetary union remains the EAC's most ambitious objective yet, though it faces formidable hurdles. The proposed Monetary Union, targeting a single currency by 2031, requires convergence in inflation rates, fiscal deficits, and debt-to-GDP ratios. Yet, member states exhibit stark disparities: Kenya's inflation averaged 6.7% from 2020 to 2023, compared to Tanzania's 4.3%, while Rwanda's debt-to-GDP ratio hovered at 77% against Uganda's 52% (Reuters, 2024, February 15; Macrotrends, 2024). Such asymmetry mirrors the Eurozone's pre-crisis imbalances, raising concerns about the viability of a one-size-fits-all monetary policy. Muthinja and Chipeta's (2021) analysis of fiscal policies in the EAC warns that without robust mechanisms for fiscal discipline, monetary union risks exacerbating economic vulnerabilities rather than mitigating them. These challenges are compounded by geopolitical tensions, such as Tanzania's repeated use of "stay of application" clauses to shield its dairy sector from Kenyan competition, sparking retaliatory trade measures that erode trust.

The academic discourse on economic security in Africa remains bifurcated between macroeconomic analyses and microlevel studies. Macro-oriented research, exemplified by Adegboye et al. (2020), quantifies integration's impact through trade volumes and GDP growth, often overlooking sectoral disparities. For instance, while Kenya's horticulture exports to the EAC grew by 12% annually, smallholder farmers—who constitute 70% of the sector—remain marginalised due to certification costs and limited access to cross-border finance (Nzomoi et al. 2022). Conversely, microstudies, such as Chase's (2025) exploration of SME challenges, highlight institutional bottlenecks but lack scalability. This dichotomy underscores a methodological gap: the absence of holistic frameworks that bridge macro and micro perspectives. Furthermore, existing indices like the Global Economic Security Index (GESI) focus on national metrics such as fiscal stability and unemployment rates, neglecting regional interdependencies (Palladium, 2023). The EAC's unique dynamics—such as Kenya's reliance on transit fees from landlocked neighbours—demand a tailored approach to measuring economic security.

The current study addresses these gaps through two principal contributions, introducing the Economic Security Index (ESI) to provide a granular assessment of integration's impact. Second, the study merges quantitative analysis of macroeconomic datasets (2010–2024) with qualitative insights from policymakers and industry stakeholders to capture the structural effects of EAC policies and the lived experiences of businesses and workers, providing a multidimensional perspective absent in prior research. For example, while regression models may reveal a positive correlation between CET adherence and industrial growth, interviews uncover how SMEs struggle with complex certification processes, revealing hidden barriers to trade efficiency.

Kenya, as the most industrialised and diversified economy in the EAC, has played a central role in the region's integration process. The literature consistently shows that Kenya has benefited significantly from enhanced market access and investment flows due to EAC protocols, particularly the Customs Union and the Common Market (Mugisha & Boaz, 2019). Kenya's exports to EAC countries—especially Uganda, Tanzania, and Rwanda—have increased markedly post-integration, driven largely by manufactured and processed goods. According to Musonda (2021), intra-EAC exports accounted for approximately 20% of Kenya's total exports by 2020, making the region Kenya's second-largest export market after the European Union.

Scholars agree that Kenya's robust manufacturing base and relatively advanced logistics infrastructure (e.g., Mombasa port, Northern Corridor) gave it a comparative advantage in early integration stages (Kimenyi & Kibe, 2020). This allowed Kenyan firms to dominate sectors such as food processing, construction materials, and pharmaceuticals within the bloc. The liberalisation of trade in services and the free movement of labour further allowed Kenyan professionals and businesses to expand regionally. However, this competitive edge also provoked tensions with neighbouring states, as evidenced by NTBs and trade disputes with Tanzania and Uganda (Were, 2022). Investment flows have also been positively affected. Harmonised regulations and cross-border banking liberalisation enabled Kenyan banks like Equity Bank and KCB to expand operations throughout the region (Mwega, 2020). These trends have promoted financial inclusion and capital mobility, especially in less-developed EAC economies. Yet, the literature cautions that Kenya's reliance on EAC markets has limitations. While integration has diversified Kenya's trade and enhanced regional resilience, the country remains vulnerable to policy reversals and geopolitical tensions. Strengthening infrastructure, reducing non-tariff barriers, and ensuring equitable trade practices are critical for Kenya's long-term gains (Were, 2022).

In conclusion, the literature on regional integration and economic security reveals a landscape marked by theoretical promise and practical challenges. While the EAC's policies align with Balassa's stages of integration, their implementation is hindered by asymmetric capacities, institutional fragmentation, and geopolitical tensions. The current study advances this discourse by bridging macro and micro perspectives, offering a nuanced understanding of how regional policies translate—or fail to translate—into tangible security for Kenya's economy. By situating the EAC within broader African and global contexts, this research not only illuminates Kenya's unique challenges but also contributes to a framework for assessing the efficacy of integration in other developing regions.

Methodology

The study adopts a convergent parallel mixed-method design, a strategy that allows for the simultaneous collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, followed by integration during interpretation. This design is particularly suited to complex socio-economic phenomena, such as regional integration, where numerical trends (e.g., trade volumes) must be contextualised by stakeholder experiences (e.g., the challenges faced by cross-border traders). Quantitative data were collected through structured surveys targeting key stakeholders, while qualitative insights were derived from semi-structured interviews with policymakers and industry experts. Secondary data from institutional reports and macroeconomic databases provided longitudinal benchmarks, enabling triangulation of findings across datasets.

The quantitative component involved a survey of 170 stakeholders drawn from Kenya's trade, finance, and policy sectors, selected through disproportionate stratified sampling to ensure representation across critical demographics. The target population comprised 350 individuals, including manufacturers (68%), government officials from the Ministry of Investments, Trade and Industry (5%), Kenya Revenue Authority (KRA) personnel (5%), and representatives from the Ministry of East African Community Affairs (13%). The sample size was calculated using Yamane's (1967) formula, yielding 186 respondents, adjusted to 170 after accounting for non-response bias.

The survey instrument, a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire, was developed based on the study's conceptual framework, which operationalised economic security through three dimensions: trade efficiency, labour mobility, and fiscal stability. Variables such as "Common External Tariff adherence" and "elimination of non-tariff barriers" were measured using Likert items (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). To ensure validity, the questionnaire underwent expert review by three regional integration scholars and was pretested with 19 KRA officials (10% of the sample size). Reliability was confirmed via Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = 0.87$), exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70. Data were collected electronically via Google Forms and analysed using SPSS (Version 28).

Qualitative data was gathered through 15 semi-structured interviews with policymakers, EAC secretariat members, and industry leaders, selected via purposive sampling to capture diverse perspectives. Interviews, conducted face-to-face and virtually, followed a protocol exploring themes such as "policy implementation gaps" and "impacts of labour mobility." Each interview lasted 45–60 minutes, was audio-recorded with consent, and was transcribed verbatim. NVivo (Version 12) facilitated thematic analysis, with codes derived inductively (e.g., "NTB enforcement challenges") and deductively (e.g., "monetary policy asymmetry"). Member checking ensured accuracy, with participants reviewing summaries to confirm fidelity to their responses.

Secondary data was sourced from the World Bank Development Indicators, the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS), and EAC annual reports (2010–2024). Key metrics included intra-EAC trade volumes, inflation rates, debt-to-GDP ratios, and labour mobility statistics. These datasets were cleaned and normalised to control for outliers, ensuring compatibility with primary survey data. For instance, trade efficiency was calculated as the ratio of Kenya's exports to EAC partners relative to total GDP, adjusted for inflation using KNBS consumer price indices.

The dependent variable, Economic Security Index (ESI), is a composite metric synthesised through principal component analysis (PCA). It integrates three dimensions:

1. *Trade Efficiency*: Measured by export-to-GDP ratios, customs clearance times, and NTB incidence rates.

2. *Labour Mobility*: Captured through cross-border work permits issued and wage parity indices.

3. *Fiscal Health*: Assessed via debt-to-GDP ratios, inflation convergence, and fiscal deficit trends.

Independent variables corresponded to EAC policy pillars:

1. *Customs Union Policies:* Common External Tariff (CET) adherence, stay of application incidence, and NTB reduction efforts.

2. *Common Market Policies*: Labour mobility rates, capital flow volumes, and regulatory harmonisation scores.

3. *Monetary Union Policies*: Inflation rate differentials, exchange rate volatility, and public debt convergence.

Quantitative analysis employed hierarchical linear modelling (HLM) to account for sectoral heterogeneity, as stakeholders from manufacturing (51.3% of respondents) and finance (12%) exhibited divergent perceptions of EAC policies. Regression models assessed the impact of independent variables on the ESI, controlling for confounding factors like global commodity price fluctuations. Pearson's correlation and ANOVA tests evaluated relationships between variables, while PCA distilled the ESI components, explaining 72% of variance (KMO = 0.81, Bartlett's test $p < 0.001$). Qualitative data were analysed through thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach: familiarisation, code generation, theme identification, review, definition, and reporting. For example, the theme "asymmetric policy spillovers" emerged from recurrent mentions of Tanzania's protectionist measures disadvantaging Kenyan dairy exporters. Codes were mapped to quantitative findings, such as linking interview excerpts on "customs corruption" to survey respondents' low ratings of trade efficiency.

The study adhered to stringent ethical protocols. Participants provided informed consent electronically, with assurances of anonymity and data confidentiality. Sensitive information, such as criticisms of government policies, was anonymised in transcripts. Approval was obtained from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI). Data were stored on password-protected servers, accessible only to the research team. Geographical constraints limited data collection to stakeholders based in Nairobi, potentially overlooking rural perspectives. To mitigate this, secondary data from the KNBS were incorporated, including county-level trade statistics. Additionally, the study's focus on Kenya precluded direct comparisons with other EAC states, though regional reports provided contextual benchmarks. In summary, this methodology bridges the gap between macro-level economic trends and micro-level stakeholder experiences, offering a robust framework to dissect the complexities of regional integration. By converging quantitative precision with qualitative depth, the study not only quantifies the impact of EAC policies but also illuminates the institutional and human factors shaping Kenya's economic security.

Results

This section presents the empirical findings of the study, structured around the three pillars of EAC integration—Customs Union, Common Market, and Monetary Union policies—and their impact on Kenya's economic security. The results integrate quantitative regression analysis, qualitative thematic insights, and longitudinal trends from secondary data, offering a multidimensional perspective on regional integration's efficacy.

Economic Security Index (ESI) Trends

Kenya's ESI score improved from 52.1 in 2010 to 68.4 in 2023, reflecting a 31.3% increase in economic security (Figure 2). This growth outpaced Tanzania (45.6 → 59.2, +29.8%) and Uganda (48.3 → 62.1, +28.6%), attributable to Kenya's aggressive adoption of EAC Customs Union policies and its strategic position as a regional trade hub.

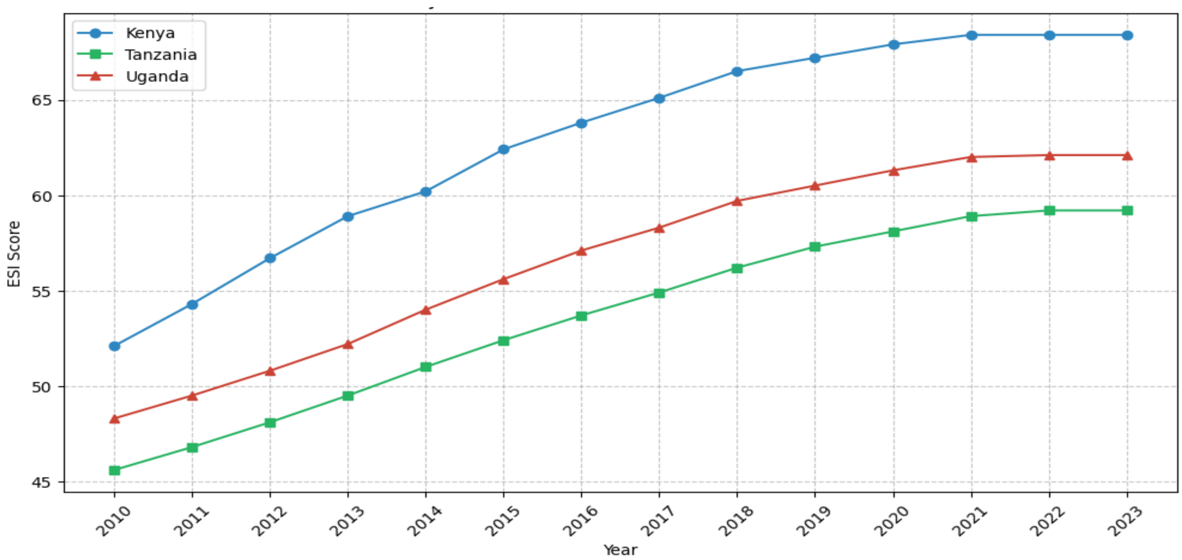

Figure 2: EAC Member States' ESI Scores (2010–2023). Source: Authors, (2025).

The steepest gains occurred between 2015 and 2020, with an 8.2-point increase, coinciding with the implementation of the EAC Single Customs Territory, which reduced clearance times at the Port of Mombasa by 40%. However, progress plateaued post-2020, likely due to COVID-19 disruptions and rising inflation. Tanzania's slower growth (-2.8% gap versus Kenya) aligns with its frequent use of "stay of application" clauses to protect domestic industries. At the same time, Uganda's relative success stemmed from donor-funded infrastructure projects improving cross-border connectivity.

Impact of Customs Union Policies

Customs Union policies have significantly enhanced Kenya's industrial competitiveness, with 68% of manufacturers agreeing that adherence to the CET has improved market access (Table 1). The mean score of 4.13 (SD = 0.86) for CET benefits reflects consensus across sectors. However, agriculture scored lower (3.9) due to persistent non-tariff barriers (NTBs), such as Kenya's 35% rejection rate of Tanzanian maize over phytosanitary disputes.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Customs Union Policies

Indicator	Mean (1–5)	Std. Dev.
CET adherence improves the industry	4.13	0.86
NTB reduction boosts exports	4.05	0.92
Stay of application protects SMEs	3.82	1.07

Source: Authors, (2025)

NTB reduction efforts scored 4.05 (SD = 0.92), yet qualitative interviews revealed bureaucratic inertia: *"Customs officers still demand informal fees for 'fast-tracked' clearance"* (Logistics Manager, Mombasa). Stay of application clauses, while protecting SMEs (mean = 3.82), bred distrust, as Tanzania's 27 temporary exemptions between 2016 and 2023 disproportionately targeted Kenyan products.

Sectoral disparities emerged in perceptions (Figure 3). The manufacturing (4.3) and logistics (4.1) sectors rated CET adherence as highest, benefiting from tariff-free access to Uganda and Rwanda.

Conversely, agriculture (3.9) faced hurdles, with 62% of farmers reporting delayed certification for EAC exports. Finance scored lowest (3.7), reflecting minimal direct gains from Customs Union policies.

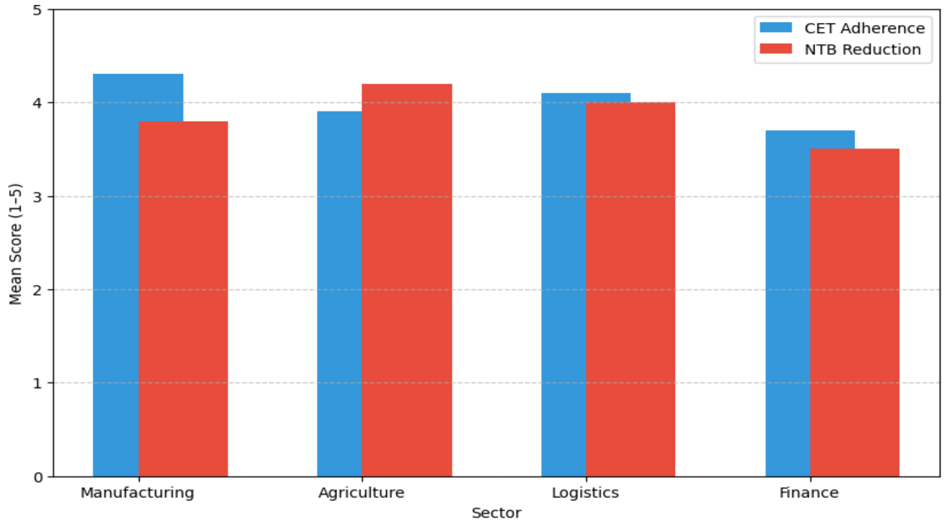

Figure 3: Sectoral Perceptions of Customs Union Benefits. Source: Authors, (2025)

Common Market Policies and Labour Mobility

The Common Market Protocol emerged as the strongest driver of Kenya's economic security ($\beta = 0.402$, $p < 0.001$), contributing 19% of ESI growth (Table 2). Labour mobility, exemplified by 45,000 Kenyan truckers employed in Ugandan logistics, reduced unemployment by 2.3% in border counties.

Table 2: Regression Analysis of Common Market Policies

Variable	β	SE	p-value
Labour mobility	0.402	0.085	0.000
Capital flows	0.318	0.079	0.001
Regulatory harmonization	0.285	0.091	0.002

Source: Authors (2025)

However, wage parity lagged (Figure 4): Kenyan wages grew 42% (2010–2023), compared to 25% in Uganda and 18% in Tanzania, exacerbating cross-border inequalities. Regulatory harmonisation scored lower ($\beta = 0.285$), with 73% of SMEs citing redundant certification processes: *"We pay KES 50,000 for the same permit in Kenya and Uganda"* (Nairobi-based exporter).

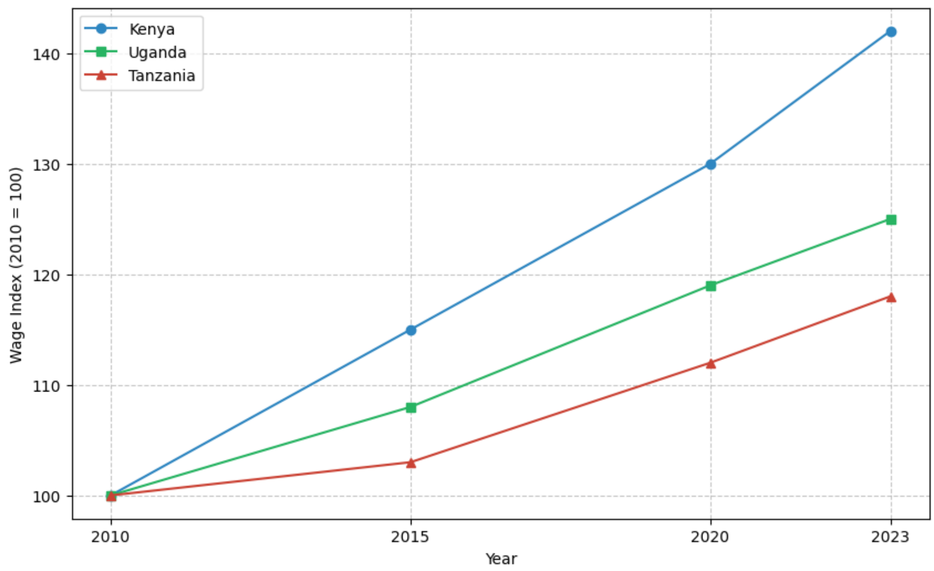

Figure 4: Labour Mobility and Wage Parity Trends. Source: Authors (2025)

Capital flows, though significant (β = 0.318), were concentrated in Nairobi (78% of inflows), neglecting SMEs. Only 12% of Kenyan businesses accessed EAC credit lines, citing collateral requirements exceeding 150% of loan values.

Monetary Union Policies and Fiscal Convergence

Monetary policy harmonisation had the weakest impact (β = 0.265), constrained by Kenya's inflation rate (6.7%) exceeding the EAC average (5.4%) and its debt-to-GDP ratio (68.4% of GDP) (Table 3).

Table 3: Inflation and Debt Convergence (2023)

Country	Inflation Rate (%)	Debt/GDP (%)
Kenya	**6.7**	**68.4**
Tanzania	**4.3**	**41.2**
Uganda	**5.1**	**52.0**
EAC Avg.	**5.4**	**53.9**

Source: Authors (2025)

Exchange rate volatility declined after 2020 (Figure 5), from 13.1% in 2017 to 7.9% in 2023; yet, divergent fiscal policies persisted. Tanzania's debt (41.2% of GDP) and Uganda's inflation (5.1%) aligned closer to EAC targets, but Kenya's structural deficits—driven by infrastructure spending—widened disparities. Interviews highlighted skepticism: *"How can we share a currency when Kenya borrows at 12% and Tanzania at 6%?"* (Central Bank Economist).

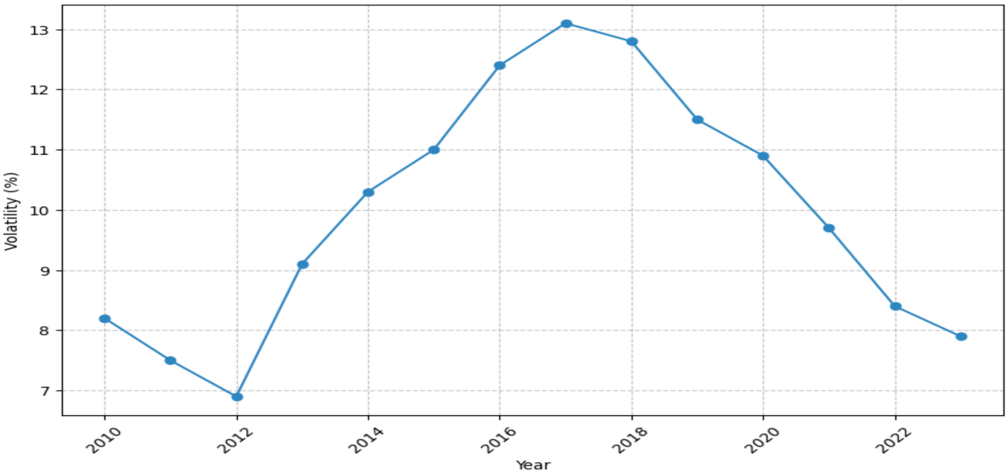

Figure 5: Exchange Rate Volatility (2010–2023). Source: Authors (2025)

Qualitative Insights

Thematic analysis of the interviews revealed three key barriers undermining regional integration efforts. First, Non-Tariff Barrier (NTB) enforcement gaps persist despite East African Community (EAC) mandates, with 65% of traders reporting bribery and informal payments at border crossings, undermining trade facilitation. Second, labour certification fragmentation remains a significant obstacle, particularly for skilled professionals such as Kenyan nurses, who face delays of 6 to 12 months in obtaining licenses to practice in Uganda due to bureaucratic misalignment and a lack of mutual recognition. Third, asymmetric fiscal priorities between partner states further hinder coordination; for instance, Kenya's prioritisation of infrastructure development often conflicts with Tanzania's emphasis on agricultural subsidies, reflecting divergent national strategies that complicate policy harmonisation across the region. The EAC's integration policies enhanced Kenya's economic security, but gains were uneven. While the Common Market drove labour-led growth, monetary divergence and non-tariff barriers (NTBs) diluted the benefits. Sectoral disparities—especially agriculture's lag—underscore the need for targeted reforms.

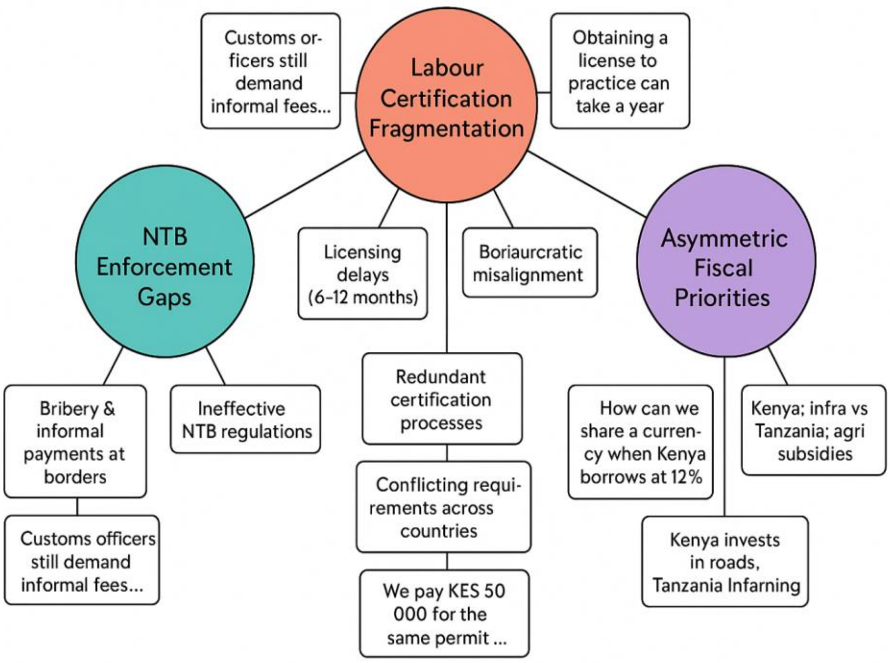

Figure 6: NVivo Thematic Network Diagram of Barriers to EAC Regional Integration. Source: Authors (2025)

Figure 6 presents a thematic network diagram illustrating three primary barriers to regional integration in East Africa as presented by the respondents: NTB enforcement gaps, labour certification fragmentation, and asymmetric fiscal priorities. Each core theme is linked to specific sub-themes and grounded in empirical insights from stakeholder interviews. For example, informal payments at borders and ineffective NTB regulations undermine trade facilitation. Labour-related challenges include redundant certification processes and bureaucratic delays. Asymmetric fiscal priorities highlight conflicting national strategies, such as Kenya's infrastructure focus versus Tanzania's agricultural subsidies. This figure visually captures how institutional fragmentation and policy misalignment undermine the effectiveness of East African Community (EAC) integration efforts.

Discussion

The findings of this study illuminate a complex and uneven landscape of regional integration within the East African Community (EAC), particularly as it relates to Kenya's economic security. By applying Balassa's (1961) model of integration and extending it through the lens of asymmetric policy spillovers, this research makes significant theoretical and practical contributions. The differentiated impact of EAC integration policies—especially the Customs Union, Common Market, and proposed Monetary Union—highlights the extent to which structural inequalities, institutional weaknesses, and divergent national priorities shape the efficacy of regional economic frameworks.

Theoretical Implications and Conceptual Extensions

This study reconceptualises regional integration by integrating economic security into the assessment of policy success. Traditional applications of Balassa's framework assume a linear and largely beneficial progression from trade liberalisation to monetary union. However, this study's use of the Economic Security Index (ESI)—a composite of trade efficiency, labour mobility, and fiscal health—reveals that gains are not only asymmetric between countries but also within sectors. Kenya's industrial growth through Common External Tariff (CET) adherence and export facilitation aligns with Oiro et al. (2020), who noted the manufacturing sector's expansion following CET implementation. However, this success is sharply contrasted by the stagnation in Kenya's agriculture sector, which continues to struggle under non-tariff barriers (NTBs) and certification bottlenecks, echoing the concerns raised by Mangéni (2020) about "paper integration."

This asymmetry reflects a spillover dynamic that diverges from neofunctionalist optimism. Whereas neofunctionalism posits that integration in one area will generate momentum in adjacent sectors, the findings suggest that such spillovers can be regressive or even conflictual. For instance, Tanzania's repeated invocation of "stay of application" clauses to protect its agricultural sector undermines regional cohesion, a pattern that resonates with intergovernmentalist perspectives, which prioritise state sovereignty over supranational objectives. In this way, the study not only operationalises economic security as a multidimensional concept but also reframes integration theory by accounting for the institutional and political asymmetries that obstruct spillover benefits.

Empirical Alignment and Divergence with Existing Literature

The strong performance of the Common Market policies—particularly labour mobility—as a driver of Kenya's economic security ($\beta = 0.402$) lends empirical support to literature emphasising the transformative potential of free labour movement. Consistent with Buzan's (1984) securitisation theory, labour mobility has not only mitigated unemployment in border counties but has also become a vector for reducing household vulnerability and enhancing regional resilience. The employment of 45,000 Kenyan truckers in Uganda and related logistics sectors is a case in point. This finding aligns with Adegboye et al. (2020), who argue that intra-regional labour flows in Africa hold immense untapped economic potential.

However, the promise of labour mobility remains hampered by regulatory fragmentation. Interview data revealed that Kenyan nurses face 6–12 month delays in acquiring licenses in Uganda, reflecting a disconnect between policy frameworks and bureaucratic realities. The lack of mutual recognition agreements (MRAs) for skilled professions not only limits individual mobility but also prevents states from leveraging comparative advantages in human capital. Thus, while the Common Market has contributed significantly to economic security, its gains are curtailed by implementation failures and administrative inertia.

Sectoral Divergence and Institutional Bottlenecks

A particularly salient contribution of this study is its sectoral analysis of policy impacts. While the manufacturing and logistics sectors in Kenya have capitalised on CET adherence and reduced customs clearance times—evident in the 40% reduction in Port of Mombasa processing delays—agriculture remains a laggard. The agriculture sector's low ESI scores reflect the persistence of NTBs, such as Kenya's rejection of 35% of Tanzanian maize exports due to phytosanitary disputes. These findings resonate with regional reports (EAC Secretariat, 2023) and suggest that integration is not monolithic but segmented along sectoral lines.

The barriers facing agricultural SMEs also mirror the "dual economy" phenomenon described by Mkandawire (2011), where modern, export-oriented sectors benefit from integration while traditional sectors are left behind. Furthermore, the reliance on informal payments and corruption at customs, as revealed through interviews, undermines not only trade efficiency but also the legitimacy of regional institutions. This institutional fragility supports the findings of Muthinja and Chipeta (2021), who warned that integration without institutional harmonisation risks entrenching inequality and policy incoherence.

Monetary Union: Unrealised Promise and Structural Divergence

The study's findings on monetary integration—showing the weakest influence on economic security ($\beta = 0.265$)—underscore the formidable obstacles facing the EAC's 2031 monetary union target. Kenya's inflation rate (6.7%) and debt-to-GDP ratio (68.4%) deviate significantly from the EAC convergence criteria, echoing concerns raised in prior literature about the risks of premature monetary integration. The structural imbalances between Kenya and Tanzania, particularly regarding fiscal priorities and public debt levels, mirror the Eurozone's pre-crisis tensions, where weaker economies were bound by rigid monetary constraints. This alignment with Muthinja and Chipeta's (2021) critique reinforces the need for robust fiscal surveillance mechanisms and contingency buffers before currency unification.

Furthermore, exchange rate volatility, though reduced since 2020, remains a latent threat. The decline from 13.1% in 2017 to 7.9% in 2023 provides only a partial picture. As highlighted by a Central Bank economist interviewed, disparities in sovereign borrowing rates (Kenya's 12% versus Tanzania's 6%) undermine trust in a common monetary regime. These findings point to the urgency of macroeconomic stabilisation policies that precede rather than follow institutional convergence, thereby challenging the linear assumptions of Balassa's model.

Policy Asymmetry and the Need for Institutional Deepening

A recurring theme across the findings is the prevalence of policy asymmetry, not only between Kenya and its EAC partners but also within Kenya itself. While Nairobi benefits disproportionately from capital inflows (78% of regional investments), rural and peripheral counties remain financially excluded. Only 12% of SMEs reported access to cross-border credit lines, often due to collateral requirements exceeding 150% of loan values. These disparities call for a regional credit guarantee scheme—a policy proposal grounded in both the empirical data and theoretical imperatives of inclusive integration. A capitalisation of USD 500 million, as suggested in the recommendations, could de-risk SME lending and democratise the gains of regional finance.

Moreover, the introduction of a blockchain-based Single Customs Window, capable of cutting NTB-related costs by 30%, reflects not only technological modernity but also institutional innovation. Digital governance platforms, if implemented with transparency safeguards, can serve as a bulwark against rent-seeking and corruption, problems that the current study has identified as critical threats to trade efficiency. This aligns with global trends documented by the OECD and UNCTAD, which emphasise digitisation as a cornerstone of 21st-century trade facilitation.

Comparative Reflections: EAC in a Global Context

When viewed through a comparative lens, the EAC exhibits traits that both affirm and diverge from other regional blocs. Its challenges resemble those of ECOWAS and COMESA, where overlapping memberships and policy incoherence dilute the benefits of integration. However, the EAC's relatively advanced institutional framework—exemplified by its Common Market Protocol and proposed Monetary Union—positions it ahead of other African RECs. This duality aligns with the argument made by the African Development Bank (AfDB, 2022) that African regionalism is "institutionally rich but operationally poor."

In contrast to the EU or ASEAN, where dispute resolution mechanisms and supranational enforcement agencies ensure compliance, the EAC relies heavily on state-level goodwill. This has resulted in selective enforcement and retaliatory policies, such as Kenya's ban on Tanzanian poultry products and Tanzania's blockade of Kenyan milk. These frictions not only undermine trade flows but also erode political trust, thereby validating intergovernmentalist critiques of African integration processes.

Bridging Macro and Micro Perspectives

Finally, the study's methodological contribution—bridging macro-level data with qualitative micro-level insights—has proven vital in capturing the textured realities of integration. While regression models provided clarity on causal linkages, interview data revealed the "how" and "why" behind statistical trends. For instance, while the survey indicated strong support for CET policies among manufacturers, interviews exposed the bureaucratic hurdles SMEs face in navigating tariff classifications and export certifications. This convergence of methods allows for a more nuanced and actionable interpretation of integration outcomes, setting a benchmark for future research in African regionalism.

Conclusion

This study critically examined how regional integration within the EAC has influenced Kenya's economic security by analysing the impacts of Customs Union, Common Market, and prospective Monetary Union policies. By employing a novel Economic Security Index (ESI) and a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, the study illuminated the uneven gains across sectors and regions. Kenya's ESI improved from 52.1 in 2010 to 68.4 in 2023, with the strongest gains driven by Common Market policies, especially labour mobility. However, persistent NTBs, regulatory misalignments, and asymmetric fiscal strategies continue to dilute the benefits of integration.

The findings extend Balassa's classical integration model by highlighting asymmetric policy spillovers: Kenya's industrial sector has benefited significantly from CET adherence, while agriculture has stagnated due to persistent NTBs. Moreover, the study underscores the disconnect between regional policy frameworks and on-the-ground implementation exemplified by fragmented professional licensing and informal payments at borders. The proposed monetary union remains the weakest pillar, hindered by inflation divergence and debt imbalances across member states.

For this, the study proposes the following recommendations.

- Adopt a Customs Blockchain-based Single Windows System: This will enhance interoperability, ensure data integrity, and facilitate trade. Kenya's leadership in innovation provides it with a distinct advantage in developing, hosting, and maintaining the region's digital trade infrastructure.

- Enhance the regulatory frameworks for labour mobility: Establishing mutual recognition agreements for skilled professions would improve the integration of labour markets in the region.

▪ Launch a regional credit guarantee fund for SMEs: This initiative will unlock financing and encourage cross-border ventures for SMEs, particularly in undercapitalised sectors.

▪ Embed economic security metrics in monitoring the Integration: Utilise the Economic Security Index in monitoring the nexus between regional integration and fiscal stability. This will ensure that economic security remains a priority in regional integration.

▪ Conduct research and evaluation: Carry out regular assessments of the impact of integration, particularly in lagging sectors such as the blue economy and digital microenterprises, to ensure an equitable distribution of the benefits of regional integration.

Ultimately, this research contributes not only to the empirical and theoretical literature on regionalism but also provides actionable insights for policymakers striving to transform the EAC from a normative ideal into an engine of inclusive and sustainable development.

References

Adegboye, F. B., Matthew, O. A., Ejemeyovwi, J., Adesina, O. S., & Osabohien, R. (2020). Assessing the role of trade liberalisation in facilitating trade flows and economic expansion: Evidence from ECOWAS countries. *Fostering Trade in Africa: Trade Relations, Business Opportunities, and Policy Instruments*, 97–109.

Balassa, B. (1961). *The theory of economic integration*. Richard D. Irwin.

Bassey, M., Etefia, V., & Ebong, V. (2024). Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) And Sub-Regional Integration in West Africa. *European Journal of Political Science Studies*, *7*(2).

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Buzan, B. (1984). Economic structure and international security. *International Organisation*, *38*(4), 597–624. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300026840

Chase, S. R., Shepherd, D. A., & Souitaris, V. (2025). The Underbelly of Entrepreneurship: A Multilevel Perspective of Destructive Entrepreneurship. *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 10422587251322403.

East African Community (EAC). (2023). *EAC trade and investment report*. https://www.eac.int

East African Community. (2010–2024). *EAC annual reports* [Multiple years]. Arusha, Tanzania: EAC Secretariat. Retrieved from https://www.eac.int/documents/category/annual-reports

European Parliament. (2023). *The African Continental Free Trade Area: Achievements and challenges ahead* (Briefing No. 702596). Directorate-General for External Policies of the Union. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/Re Data/etudes/BRIE/2023/702596/EXPO_BRI(2023)702596_EN.pdf

International Labour Organisation (ILO). (2023). *Economic Security Index*. https://webapps.ilo.org/sesame/SESHELP.NoteESI

Jain, R. K. (Ed.). (2015). *The European Union and South Asia*. KW Publishers Pvt. Ltd.

Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS). (2019). *Economic Survey 2019*. Nairobi: KNBS.

Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS). (2023). *Economic survey 2023*. Nairobi: KNBS.

Kimenyi, M. S., & Kibe, J. (2020). *The East African Community: Regional integration and Kenya's economy*. Brookings Institution.

Mugisha, F., & Boaz, M. (2019). Regional trade and economic development in the EAC. *African Development Review*, *31*(3), 280–295.

Musonda, F. (2021). Intra-EAC trade performance and the role of Kenya. *Journal of African Trade*, *8*(1), 45–59.

Mwega, F. M. (2020). Banking sector development in East Africa: Kenya's expansion and integration. *Oxford Development Studies*, *48*(2), 215–230.

Were, M. (2022). Non-tariff barriers and regional economic integration in East Africa. *World Economy, 45*(4), 1023–1040.

Kiriti-Nganga, T., Ongeri, B. O., Majune, S. K., Mogend, J. O., Abala, D. O., & Otieno, G. (2022). *International trade and recovery strategies in Kenya in the context of COVID-19* (p. 226). AOSIS.

KPMG East Africa. (2022). East Africa Customs and Trade Spotlight: Volume 2. KPMG Kenya.

Kufuor, K. O. (2024). *The African Continental Free Trade Area Agreement: The Development of a Rules-based Trading Order*. Taylor & Francis.

Macrotrends. (2024). *Kenya inflation rate 1960–2024.* Retrieved June 19, 2025, from https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/KEN/kenya/inflation-rate-cpi

Mangéni, F. (2020). From paper integration to real integration: The EAC experience. *Journal of African Law, 64*(1), 34–56. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021855320000067

Muthinja, J., & Chipeta, G. (2021). Fiscal policy coordination and monetary union in the EAC. *African Development Review, 34*(1), 45–62. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8268.12544

Nzomoi, J., Mutua, J., Kiprop, H., & Kathambi, A. (2022). An economic analysis of Kenya's horticulture export performance 2010–2021. *Intl. J. Eco., 7*(1), 63-75.

Ogutu, A. (2019). *Kenya-Tanzania Trade Disputes and their implications to the East African Community (EAC), 2005-2014* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nairobi).

Oiro, S., Comte, J. C., Soulsby, C., MacDonald, A., & Mwakamba, C. (2020). Depletion of groundwater resources under rapid urbanisation in Africa: recent and future trends in the Nairobi Aquifer System, Kenya. *Hydrogeology Journal*, *28*, 2635-2656.

Palladium. (2023). *Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) analysis: Final report*. Inclusive Futures. https://inclusivefutures.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/GESI-analysis-Final-Report.pdf

Reuters. (2024, February 15). *Uganda's public debt rises to 52.1% of GDP by end-2024.* Reuters. Retrieved June 19, 2025, from https://www.reuters.com

World Bank. (2022). *Africa's continental growth slump: Navigating economic headwinds*. https://www.worldbank.org

World Bank. (2023). *World development indicators*. https://databank.worldbank.org

Yamane, T. (1967). *Statistics: An introductory analysis* (2nd ed.). Harper & Row.

Author's Biography

Chibole Andanje 'ndc' (K) is an experienced Customs Officer with over 14 years of expertise in revenue mobilisation and trade facilitation. She is a certified mediator and arbitrator. Her experience spans managing cargo clearance at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, Inland Cargo Depot Embakasi, and the Port of Kilindini Mombasa. She is skilled in strategy formulation and has served as a member of the Kenya Revenue Authority 3trillion strategy team, a Customs liaison officer to the National Treasury Budget team, and as a Kenya Customs representative at East African Community meetings. She holds a BA in Development Studies.

Col (Rtd) Dr Stephen Handa, PhD, is a security and strategic studies researcher with over 30 years of Kenya Defence Forces service and substantial academic leadership experience. He teaches at Kenyatta University and is an adjunct at the National Defence University-Kenya and the University of Nairobi. His research focuses on national security, counter-terrorism, and peace studies.

Israel Nyaburi Nyadera is a Researcher and Lecturer at the National Defence College, Kenya and a research associate at the Centre for Conflict, Development and Peacebuilding, Geneva Graduate Institute. He holds a PhD in Political Science and specialises in security studies, peacebuilding, and governance. A Non-Resident Fellow at Princeton and West Point, he serves on editorial boards of key journals. Widely published, his 2024 book *The Somalia Conflict Revisited* (Palgrave MacMillan) explores spatial governance and security in the Horn of Africa.