

Coalitions of the willing: JPM scuttles Kenya-Uganda alliance, EAC in ICU

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HISTORY has a tendency to repeat itself, often in 11-year or 21-year cycles, algorithms that were not discovered by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel or Karl Marx as they would force them to admit the role of the spirit in history, not just reason.

That is what is happening in East Africa, that 21 years after President Benjamin Mkapa laid the foundations for revival of the East African Community by visiting Kenya and Uganda early in his presidency, his favored protégé President John Magufuli is gradually laying to rest the 'dragon' of East African integration and its intention of federation, already rejected in 2007, first cycle in Mkapa institution building drive.

From that moment onwards, following the report of the Wangwe Commission that Tanzanians overwhelmingly rejected the idea of East African Federation being quickened, Tanzania has more or less eroded its commitment to integration as such except for the East African Customs Union.

Ten years later there is a repeat of the 1996 visits to Kenya and Uganda in the early period of the third phase presidency, as East African sensitivity moves from donor-driven integration to a locally driven quest for industrialization. Each disposition has a distinct 'coalition of the willing.'

While Kenya and Rwanda may have laughed first in the preliminary phase of gearing up to economic partnership agreement with the European Union, on the basis of a distinct possibility that Uganda joins them, now the tide has turned.

It is clear that Ugandan President Museveni has lately become a student of President Magufuli in privileging the local quest for industrialization



Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni, Rwandan President Paul Kagame and Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta in an early 2015 photo. Little of the EAC-EPA projection of that period remains valid today.

instead of liberalization in a generalized manner, elimination of 90 per cent of customs duties on goods from the European Union. Kenya and Rwanda must now denounce own signatures.

It was already public knowledge that the two had signed and ratified the EU-EAC protocol for EPA, as a way of impressing upon Uganda to sign up, having been a member of the old coalition of the willing, bent on an EPA-friendly liberalized framework of EAC integration.

Now an inward orientation to industrialization is taking over the hearts and minds of the EA business class, askance at liberalization on the scale demanded by the EU, and tending to privilege what were traditionally exclusively Tanzanian arguments at official levels, or radical arguments generally. It is clearly a sentiment that appeals to broad sections of the EA local bourgeoisie.

When President Magufuli visited Kenya, the EPA agenda

remained high in Kenyan spirits, and at the end of the visit, Foreign Ministry spokesmen insisted that the EPA plan was still on the table, that they would continue to make a case to Tanzania to come on board.

With Uganda signaling that it is no longer likely to sign, there is little hope remaining for EPA, and in the new orientation of East African integration on the basis of localized industrialization, even the customs union has some perils attached to it.

the current period to views in Europe and America, while Uganda like Zanzibar was a protectorate, holding a midway view. Tanganyika was a trust territory and in that sense disposed to be inward looking.

When the three countries became independent (and Zanzibar, briefly though its particular parameters had to be embedded into Tanzanian nationalism, radicalizing it in its inward outlook on account of the permanent Gulf adversary of Hizbu, to add to the Southern Africa colonial states) this didn't change.

Kenya rapidly took up Barclays Bank loans for land purchasers and a US 'African Socialism' liberal blueprint, while Tanganyika hesitated, crushing cultural entities for a centrally located state image. It then moved against foreign presence, completing its image.

Uganda failed to centralize the state cohesively in like manner as Zanzibar, whose equivalent of the Kabala fell to a revolutionary band whose leaders soon realized it couldn't stabilize, thus sought the union.

Uganda stuttered and fell, lived with a 'military ethnocracy' for seven years and then metamorphosed violently into a Tanzanian type liberation radicalism which embedded vast liberalization. It is the latter aspect which brought it closer to Kenya, in like manner as Rwanda as it sought to modernize its economy so as to outgrow violent ethnicity, genocide soul.

A core promise of EPA was that in giving full rights of trade and economic activity to European companies as if they were local firms, state institutions would thus be tuned to Commonwealth standards rule of law, which can't be assured by local entities like an East African Court of Justice.

Late last year it ruled that a High Court decision in

Burundi reached under vexing circumstances - giving an olive branch to President Pierre Nkurunziza to seek another term of office - was rightful and in due order. It sent a cry of dismay across the zone, reminding all and sundry some of the lessons of Ali Mazrui; without imperialism, Africa can't democratize.

The current or new consensus in East Africa, where even Rwanda is likely to join this new coalition of the willing - to focus on localized industrialization, ditch EPA and diminish concerns for Western standards of democracy - is yet to be seen in terms of its productivity and solving deeply embedded social crises in each of EAC member states. One thing though is assured inward looking industrialization is akin to an exercise in futility as global conditions are more hostile to inwardness than would be the case earlier, due to lower capacity of capital formation locally.

Taxes will be driven to higher levels, quality of goods and their abundance far less assured (relatively diminished purchasing power) and less sensitive, spectacularly or overly authoritarian regime characteristics.

There will be counteracting trends all the same, for instance in the stance of the new US presidency, combining an America First aloofness liked by Zimbabwean centenarian leader Robert Mugabe and a more violent intolerance for deviant or rogue state behaviour, warning early the two Kenyan claimants to the presidency later this year to rein in their guns or else.

The world might not be altogether safe for an illiberal course, policy in EAC. With EAC summit twice postponed, it is bilateral accords, not EAC that remains - and thus new rules are being raised to eliminate the common market root and stem.